

Brunel University, West London, UK

Elite Child Athlete Welfare: International Perspectives

Celia H Brackenridge and Daniel Rhind (Eds.)



2010

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Preface

In this publication, readers will find much more than an introduction to the issues of child protection and the elite child athlete. Presented here is the 'front of the wave' research of many of the very best international scholars and practitioners in the field. Celia Brackenridge and Daniel Rhind are to be congratulated for pulling such an august group together.

The work included here covers the history of the study of sexual harassment and abuse in sport, and the critical re-thinking of rights-based, and in particular, child rights-based discourses as they apply to the protection of child athletes. So too, the increasingly integrated and critical work of UNICEF and the International Olympic Committee as it intersects with child protection in sport is covered through the writings of Susan Bissell (Head of Child Protection UNICEF) and Dr. Margo Mountjoy (IOC Medical Commission) respectively. Through the formation of collaborative task forces, the work of UNICEF and the IOC has come together with those researchers and practitioners who might be called 'venerables' including Kari Fasting (Norwegian School of Sport Sciences), Anne Tiivas (NSPCC), Sandra Kirby (University of Winnipeg, Canada), Celia Brackenridge (Brunel University, UK), Trisha Leahy (absent, Hong Kong) and Petra Moget (The Netherlands Olympic Committee/Confederation of Sport). This group has worked to define the field of child protection in sport - from Margo Mountjoy's "if we get the science right, the politics will follow" to Celia Brackenridge's call to have the rights-based approach permeate sport practice.

Also included here are the research and practical applications which demonstrate how the field of study has taken hold. Child protection work is now firmly rooted in the diverse works of the young scientists and practitioners from around the world - represented by the work of, for example, Liz Pike (Chichester University), Gretchen Kerr (University of Toronto, Canada), Andrea Scott (University of Chichester), Mike Hartill (Edge Hill University), Daniel Rhind (Brunel University), Mel Lang (Edge Hill University), Misia Gervis (Brunel University), Joca Zurc, (College of Nursing, Jesenice, Slovenia), Abbe Brady (Gloucestershire University), Jon Oliver (UWIC), and Sylvie Parent (Laval University, Canada). Their work covers such themes as the relationship between health and performance, the important role of leadership in everything from application of codes of conduct to education and policy development in child protection work, the exploration of 'the flourishing athlete', and the inclusion of psychological abuse in child athlete protection.

The impact of the Elite Child Athlete conference will now deepen and broaden through the establishment of the Brunel International Research network for Athlete Welfare (BIRNAW, <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sse/sseres/sseresearchcentres/youthsport/birnaawmain>) – the network which will now take on leadership of the research and implementation of research on child protection in sport. It was a great pleasure for me personally to attend this conference: we anticipate that you will find this book to be a call to action as much as a challenging read.

Sandra Kirby, University of Winnipeg, Canada, July 2010

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Celia is Director of the Centre for Youth Sport and Athlete Welfare at Brunel University in West London. She has carried out major studies of on women and leadership in leisure management and child protection in sport, including abuse and harassment issues. She was programme consultant to the IOC Medical Commission Consensus Statement on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport and to the UNICEF working group on violence against children in sport. Celia is author of *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport*, Routledge (2001).



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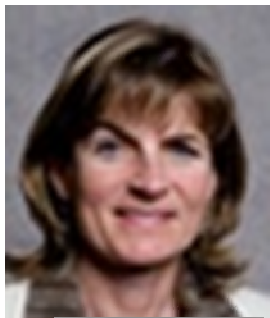


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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: *Setting the challenge - The ethical and research context of children's involvement in elite sport*

Celia Brackenridge, Brunel University, UK

Overview

The Symposium on which this book is based took place at Brunel University, UK on 17 and 18th June 2010. Participants included researchers from sociology, psychology and sports medicine, policy makers from national and international sport and welfare organisations, and practitioners from various national and international sport governing bodies. All are committed to promoting the best in sport and preventing the worst, and to ensuring that young athletes realise their own potential in the safest possible environment. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to set the scene for the other contributions in the book and to offer some potential frameworks for devising research and policy agendas in this field.

Recent reviews of talent identification and youth sport in the sport science literature are summarised and critiqued in relation to athlete welfare. In particular, it is argued that the 'time-economic motive' (Vaeyens *et al.*, 2009) has undermined the prospects for delivering children's rights in elite sport. The work of Coté and colleagues (2003) is used to illustrate a wider approach to welfare in sport that opens up some possibilities for re-balancing both the discourses and the practices of elite sport for children. The case of Tom Daley, child Olympic diver, is used to highlight some of the welfare challenges facing sport organisations, support staff and others in their attempts to scaffold talented young athletes. Contradictions and tensions are set out that are intended to guide thinking on how best to cater for the welfare of the elite child athlete.

Surveying the field

With Great Britain's successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games came keen national interest, in both policy circles and among the wider public, in the potential for medal success. This, in turn, led to a plethora of state-supported talent identification and development schemes across the country. The concepts associated with talent (Bloom, 1985; Coté, 1999) are many and varied:

- Talent pool
- Talent gaps
- Talent identification
- Talent matching
- Talent development
- Talent promotion
- Talent acceleration
- Talent transfer/crossover/athlete reassignment – 'donor' and 'recipient' sports

- Talent recycling
- 'Relative age effect' (Musch and Grondin, 2001)
- 'Career transitions' (Stambulova, 1994; Wylleman *et al.*, 2004)
- 'Early and late specialisation' sports
- 'Ten Year/Ten Thousand Hour Rule' (Simon and Chase, 1973)
- 'Theory of Deliberate Practice' (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993 and others)
- 'Long Term Athlete Development' (Balyi and Hamilton, 2004)
- 'Sampling years' (Coté, Baker and Abernethy, 2003)
- 'Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP)' (Coté and Fraser-Thomas, 2006)

In a 2009 review of research on talent identification and development programmes at Olympic level (Vaeyens *et al.*, 2009) the entire paper focussed on empirical data related to performance variables such as age, training onset, performance level, number of sports practised and so on. The dominant consideration was 'investment patterns' in young athlete talent. The authors pointed to estimates from Australian sport (Hogan and Norton, 2000), for example, that an Olympic medal cost about A\$37m for a gold and A\$8m per medal in general. The so-called 'time-economic motive', by which long term investment is assumed to lead to medal success, was contrasted with the 'talent crossover' approach, by which high performance systems can benefit from transferring already talented, mature athletes from a 'donor' sport to a 'recipient' sport. At no point in this review did human considerations of desire, pleasure, fulfilment or joy feature at all, nor was a single athlete voice reported. At no point were children's rights mentioned. I would argue that this approach to the commodification and processing of athletic talent separates the objective from the subjective, disembodies the human being at the centre of the enterprise – the child – and undermines the prospects for delivering children's rights in elite sport.

In a somewhat broader review of research on involvement in youth sports Fraser-Thomas and Coté (2006) assessed the benefits for youth of engaging in sport against three commonly identified outcomes: physical health, psychosocial development and motor skills. Even 'enjoyment' was acknowledged as "critical" despite not yet being "fully integrated in athlete development research" (p.31-2). Unusually for literature on this subject, the authors acknowledged early in the paper that positive benefits are *not* automatic and went on to list research on a range of psychosocial detriments such as:

- feeling excessive pressure to win
- feeling unattached to teams
- injuries
- eating disorders
- low self-confidence and self-esteem
- poor sportspersonship
- poor moral reasoning and,
- acts of violence and aggression

The authors concluded (drawing on Gould, 1987, p. 2) that, possibly due to these experiences, attrition rates from sport are extremely high during adolescence. We know that research on abuse and harassment in sport is in its infancy, with international peer reviewed papers on the subject appearing in the literature only in the past 15-20 years. Yet even this literature was not connected with child rights discourses until very recently (Donnelly, 1997; Tymowski, 2001; David, 2005; Farstad, 2006; McCardle and Giulianotti, 2006). However, such is recent medical interest in harms to children in sport that the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* published a special issues on the subject in January 2010 (Caine, 2010) that addressed topics such as: heat injuries, long-term health outcomes, steroid use, violence, overweightness and disordered eating.

As other contributors to this book point out, both athlete development and child maltreatment are deeply gendered processes. It is certainly worth reminding ourselves of this, and of the other important parameters of the elite sport experience. We know virtually nothing, for example, of class, disability or race differences in this field, let alone their intersecting influences on elite child sport. In a special issue of *Child Abuse Review* (Kelly and Pringle, 2009, p. 370), the editors synthesised the issues facing research and practice in general in order to improve our understanding of gender relations and child maltreatment:

1. there are both moral and practical reasons for putting the child's voice at the centre of academic analysis and welfare practice
2. intersectional approaches to power dynamics should be adopted in both research and practice
3. research and practice should attend to context (space and time) in order effectively to counter child harm

These issues will no doubt help researchers in their agenda-setting for future work.

Age and the case of Tom Daley

The age of competitive eligibility for elite sport has frequently been contested (Maffuli and Pintore, 1990; Cahill and Pearl, 1993; Otis *et al.*, 2006). It has become a more pressing concern since the emergence of research data showing that the greatest risk of emotional and sexual abuse occurs among the highest ranked athletes (Brackenridge, 2010). Some even argue that athletes are complicit in their own physical and emotional abuse, normalising such practices as simply the price of elite success (Reynolds, 2000). The selection of diver Tom Daley to compete in the 2008 Olympic Games at just 14 years old was welcomed by many but also strongly criticised. Would Beijing be a useful or a damaging preparation for London 2012? Should Tom have been chosen at all at such a young age? What were the risks and benefits and how should they be weighed? Tom, who since then became World Champion, returned from Beijing to face increasingly stressful bouts of bullying from his school peers: one peer allegedly said "How much are those legs worth? We're going to break your legs" (Eason and Bruxelles, 2009). His father eventually moved him to another school. Tom said:

It's gone on a long time now but it reached a peak after the Olympics and has just stayed there. They've been taking the mick for ages, calling me 'Diver Boy', but now they spend

most of their time throwing stuff at me ... It's sad and annoying that I can't have a normal life. But I put up with it because I'm doing something I love.

(cited in McRae, 2009, p. 13)

The philosophical and ethical issues associated with this kind of example, of freedom, choice and autonomy on the one hand, and control, paternalism and protectionism on the other, have not yet been clearly articulated in sport policy discourses. Overall, we face a number of contradictions and tensions in the way we seek to resolve how best to cater for the elite child athlete like Tom. These include, but are not restricted to:

Age status	Adult v. child
Age eligibility	'If you're good enough you're old enough' v. protectionism
Existential status	Human being v. human/doing or commodity
Investment status	Elite performance lifestyle v. education and future career
Developmental status	Legal thresholds v. progressive autonomy/evolving capacity
Team status/peer rivalry	Adult athlete needs v. child athlete's needs
Family status/sibling rivalry	Athlete v. siblings
Entitlement	Child's rights v. adult's rights
Approach to constraint	Negative freedom v. positive freedom
Agency/power to influence	Athlete/welfare officer/support staff v. head coach

In summary, I conclude that:

- there are significant age-related pressures for elite child athletes yet these have been under-researched;
- the dominant discourse in research on elite talent in sport is an economic one, focussed on the costs and benefits of investment;
- what little research we have on detrimental experiences in elite youth sport is generally from a psychological rather than a cultural or institutional perspective; and,
- the turn towards a rights-based discourse in sport has occurred only very recently and has yet to permeate the governance of *elite* sport.

The aim of this book is to debate these issues, in the light of empirical research findings, and to highlight future research priorities for the international sport research and policy community. By adding the individual interests of the authors in this volume to a wider approach to welfare in sport I hope we will open up some possibilities for re-balancing both the discourses and the practices of elite sport for children.

Thanks to interest from the world's most important sport organisation – the IOC - we now have Consensus Statements on *The Training of the Elite Child Athlete* (IOC, 2005) and on *Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport* (IOC, 2007): nobody would contradict the final exhortation in the former, that the “entire sports process for the elite child athlete should be pleasurable and fulfilling” yet, along with agencies such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2006) I am sure we would also agree that we are a long, long way from realising this in practice. Thanks to interest from UNICEF (2010) we also now have the world's largest child protection agency

engaged in violence prevention in children's sport. It is my hope, indeed expectation, that these two organisations will cooperate in a kind of pincer movement on sport and political organisations (whether government-based or NGOs) to enhance the future welfare of the elite child athlete.

The task ahead

The specific objectives facing the members of the Symposium from which this book is drawn were to:

1. bring together leading academics, policy makers and young scientists in the field of youth sport and athlete welfare
2. share and report on cutting edge research findings on risks (psycho-social and emotional, physical, sexual and institutional) to elite child athletes
3. hear from major international and national stakeholders about policy development in elite child athlete welfare, and share best practice
4. agree future research priorities that will further inform elite child athlete welfare and to develop and launch a network of researchers for future bids to the ESRC, EU and other appropriate research bodies

In addition to the book, a major outcome of the Symposium was the launch of a new research network - the Brunel International Research Network on Athlete Welfare (BIRNAW). In Chapter 18, the editors lay out a set of proposals that will inform the next few years of collaborative work between BIRNAW and sport policy communities and that we hope will ensure that athlete welfare takes its rightful place in the deliberations of sport agencies around the world.

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PART 2: GLOBAL CONTEXT

Chapter 2: *Notes on international children's rights, implications for elite sport and the work of UNICEF*

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Framing the issue

While recognizing that every youth and child has a right to sport and play, the human rights of participants must be respected and protected. The collective aim must be to create protective environments in which girls and boys are safe from all forms of violence and exploitation. There must be concerted effort to protect the rights of children and to expand the opportunities they have to reach their full potential. We have a duty to ensure that children participating in sport do so in an environment that is both enjoyable and safe. The most common forms of abuse in sport are physical, sexual, psychological and neglect; abuse that can have devastating consequences for the health and development of children.

How violence, rights and sport are linked

- Sport can be a conduit for violence and exploitation
- Sport can be the cause of violence and exploitation
- Evidence of violence against children in sport is undeniable but under-researched
- Need to define athletes in a way that is appropriate to their needs, as children first and athletes second

Child rights violations in sport

- Gender and sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse
- Hazing and bullying
- Homophobic abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- HIV/AIDS related
- Trafficking

A Closer Look

Physical abuse:

- Physical norms, overtraining and risk of injury
- Peer aggression
- Child labour

- Parental pressure
- Disordered eating
- Doping/drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Trafficking

Examples of violence in sport

- Psychological degradation or humiliation based on gender, body shape, or performance
- Exertion of undue pressure on young athletes to achieve high performance
- Requiring sex as a prerequisite for team selection or privileges
- Physically injurious or sexually degrading initiation (hazing) rituals
- Nutrition and weight loss regimes leading to eating disorders such as anorexia or other health problems
- Beatings and other physical chastisement as a spur to performance
- Injury through forced risk-taking in extreme environments
- Use of performance-enhancing drugs
- Peer pressure to use alcohol or addictive substances
- Requiring young athletes to play when injured
- Use of physical exercise as a punishment

Examples of initiatives for violence prevention in children's sport (see Table 2.1)

Summary

Children have a right to be free from violence and/or exploitation in sport

UNICEF condemns all violence against children, and calls upon those involved in sport at every level to take steps to protect the children under their responsibility

Food for thought

1. Where is UNICEF's leadership in the area of Child Protection and Sport?
2. Who should UNICEF be working with?
3. How can the International Sport Fund for Child Protection and Sport support ongoing initiatives?

Table 2.1 The current environment – initiatives for children’s rights in sport

INITIATIVE	Partners	Purpose	Activities/Plans
IRC Review and Working Paper (Brackenridge <i>et al.</i> ,/UNICEF IRC, 2010a and b)	Expert panel Innocenti Research Centre staff Input from Committee on the Rights of the Child	Gather evidence from a systematic review Make the case for child rights and protection in sport	Developed since 2007 Published July 2010 World-wide dissemination
Internal Briefing Note	Programmes (Child Protection, Civil Society Partnerships/Sport) DOC and IRC	To clarify the issues and provide internal guidance for Country Offices and Natcoms	Released with the IRC Digest/Review, July 2010
West Indies Cricket Board CP Module (Barbados CO)	Action for Children West Indies Cricket Board UNICEF	To develop a training programme to educate cricket coaches about basic principles and practices of child protection Follows the English and Wales Cricket Board example	Pilot: To train cricket coaches at all levels in Barbados in one-day training
International Child Protection and Sport Fund (UNICEF France)	Ministry UNICEF Key Sport Actors Civil Society Partners	To support initiatives that help prevent exploitation and trafficking in sport in select countries in Africa	Launched in spring 2010
International Inspiration (UNICEF UK)	UK Sport British Council UNICEF UK	To ensure partners adhere to child protection [guiding] principles and delivery programmes where children are protected at all times	Previously conducted a survey Follow up at country level
Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment and Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child UNICEF	To comment on the overall matter of violence, abuse and exploitation in the lives of children To assert children’s rights in sport To add sport to existing documents To raise awareness of the issues To include sport in the measures of progress on article 19 of the Convention	Ongoing from 2009-
IOC Sexual Harassment and Abuse Initiative	IOC Medical Commission Independent Experts Universities	To address sexual harassment and abuse in sport	Release 2 on-line modules to better understand and address the issues: for individuals and coaches, for national and international sport organisations
SDP IWG CP & Sport SubWorking Group	UN Office of Sport for Development and Peace Governments UN Agencies Independent. experts as needed	To ensure governments are briefed and addressing violence against children in sport	First meeting of SDP IWG Child and Youth Development Subworking Group held 5 May 2010

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Chapter 3: *Protecting the elite child athlete: The IOC perspective*

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Overview

Since the inception of the World Anti-Doping Association in 1999, the focus of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Medical Commission has shifted from anti-doping to athlete health. According to Jacques Rogge, the IOC President, protection of the health of the athlete is the primary goal of the IOC Medical Commission. Other goals include:

- Respect for both medical and sports ethics.
- Equality for all competing athletes.

Based on these goals, the IOC Medical Commission has developed initiatives aimed at the protection of athlete health. This chapter will review the underlying principles for these projects found in the Olympic Charter (2007) and the Olympic Movement Medical Code (2009). Specific projects related to the promotion of the physical and psychological health of the elite child athlete will also be examined including:

- Survey results of International Federations
- Training the Elite Child Athlete
- Fitness and Health of Children through Sport
- Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport
- Respect Me!
- Female Athlete Triad
- Hungry for Gold
- Body Composition and Performance
- Injury Prevention
- Age Determination
- Disorders of Sexual Development
- Youth Olympic Games

Underlying fundamental principles of Olympism

All activities of the IOC Medical Commission are based on the principles of Olympism that are found in the Olympic Charter 2007. In particular, the first fundamental principle of Olympism outlines the role of sport as a philosophy of life based on respect for ethical principles:

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

The second principle outlines the important aspect of preservation of human dignity:

The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

Finally, the fourth fundamental principle delineates sport as a human right; free of discrimination:

The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

These values outlined in the Olympic Charter underpin the projects related to the preservation of the health of the elite athlete.

The Olympic Movement Medical Code

The IOC Medical Commission has implemented the Olympic Movement Medical Code (Code) (IOC, 2009a) which serves as an ethical guideline for the protection of the health of the elite athlete. This Code is enforced by all members of the Olympic Movement including International Federations and National Olympic Committees at the time of the Games. The goal of the Code is:

The Olympic Movement, in accomplishing its mission, should encourage all stakeholders to take measures to ensure that sport is practised without danger to the health of the athletes and with respect for fair play and sports ethics. To that end, it encourages those measures necessary to protect the health of participants and to minimise the risks of physical injury and psychological harm.

The Code reviews the intricacies of the unique relationship between athletes and their health care providers. Guidelines for ethical boundaries are discussed as well as principles for the protection and promotion of the athlete's health during training and competition. With respect to the elite child athlete, the Olympic Movement Medical Code states that:

Health care providers should oppose any sports or physical activity that is not appropriate to the stage of growth, development, general condition of health, and level of training of children. They should act in the best interest of the health of children or adolescents, without regard to any other interests or pressures from the entourage (e.g., coach, management, family, etc.) or other athletes.

The principles in the Olympic Movement Medical Code address the ethical protection of health of the elite athlete and serve to guide the development of IOC projects.

Survey of International Federations

In 2003, an IOC working group on the elite child athlete was formed consisting of members from the International Federations of aquatics (FINA), gymnastics (FIG), football (FIFA), tennis (ITF), and skating (ISU). This group was tasked with the assignment to address the health of the elite child athlete. To better understand the current sport practices with respect to elite child athletes, this group completed a survey of all Olympic Movement International Federations. There was a 90% response rate to the survey. It was found that 45% of all International Federations had no minimum age requirement for participating at international level sporting events, and 40% had no minimum age requirement for the Olympic Games. Of the 55% of the International Federations with age requirements, the minimum age ranged widely from 8-16 years. 33% of the International Federations surveyed did not have any modifications to their rules to accommodate the specific growth and development needs of the child athlete. 19% had issues related to age declaration and one International Federation had experienced a doping infraction in a child athlete. 71% of those surveyed had educational programs directed towards coaches relating to the elite child athlete, and 26% had educational information available for parents. Only 29% of those surveyed supported elite child athlete research.

Training the elite child athlete

The results of this unpublished survey stimulated the IOC Medical Commission to hold a Consensus Conference on the Training of the Elite Child Athlete. The Consensus Statement defines the elite child athlete as one with “superior athletic talent, undergoes specialised training, receives expert coaching and is exposed to early competition.” The introduction identifies the distinctive attributes of the elite child athlete and summarizes the basic training requirements. A review of the scientific evidence provides guidelines for the aerobic and anaerobic training, strength training, psychological preparation and nutritional requirements of the elite child athlete. Special issues unique to the child athlete are identified and discussed including growth disparity of bone and soft tissue, overtraining, eating disorders and maturational mismatching. Requirements for the age-appropriateness of the sporting environment are identified including the necessity for freedom from drug misuse and negative adult influences. The Consensus Statement (IOC, 2005) concludes with recommendations aimed at the research community, sport governing bodies, parents and the athlete’s entourage.

Fitness and health of children through sport

Although the elite child athlete is a particular focus of the IOC, the IOC Medical Commission recently decided to address another area of health concern for children worldwide. It is apparent through public health statistics that children are suffering health consequences from inactivity and obesity. This issue was underscored in the words of President Rogge in his opening address at the Olympic Movement in Society Congress in Copenhagen, 2009:

In the late 1800s, de Coubertin worried that youth in his native France were turning away from physical activity. Today, we see the same problem in the growing rate of

youth obesity throughout the world ... We are here to make sure that the Olympic Movement will continue to serve athletes, the world's youth and society at large for decades to come.

A recommendation from this Congress addressed this issue:

<#51> Everyone involved in the Olympic Movement must become more aware of the fundamental importance of physical activity and sport for a healthy life style, not least in the growing battle against obesity, and must reach out to parents and schools as part of a strategy to counter the rising inactivity of young people.

A review of the scientific data on child health reveals that the rates of childhood obesity are increasing and that obese children are more likely to become obese adults at risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Resulting from this evidence, the IOC Medical Commission will hold a Consensus meeting on this topic in January 2011 to address the role of sport in this serious public health issue.

Sexual harassment and abuse in sport

In 2007, the IOC addressed another issue important to the protection of the elite child athlete. The aim of the Sexual Harassment & Abuse in Sport Consensus Statement (IOC, 2008) is to improve the health and protection of athletes through the promotion of effective preventive policy as well as to increase the awareness of these problems among the people in the athlete's entourage. The introduction to the Consensus Statement sets the context illustrating the problem of sexual harassment and abuse in sport. The document defines sexual harassment, sexual abuse, gender harassment, hazing and homophobia and illustrates these terms with examples from within the sporting environment. The scientific evidence regarding prevalence, risks and consequences of sexual harassment and abuse in sport is reviewed. The Consensus Statement outlines the unique relationships in sport between athletes and those in positions of power in the athlete's world. Prevention strategies for sexual harassment and abuse are illustrated and specific recommendations directed towards sports organizations are proposed.

Respect Me!

The 1st Youth Olympic Games (YOG) to be held in August 2010 in Singapore provides an opportunity to educate the elite youth athletes and coaches of the world on various cultural and health related topics pertaining to sport. One of the projects that will be debuted in the Cultural and Educational Program developed by the IOC Medical Commission is *Respect Me!* This educational tool is an on-line animation depicting various scenarios illustrating sexual harassment and abuse in sport including hazing, homophobia, sexual abuse and gender harassment. Educational material is provided on-line for athletes and for coaches. This e-learning tool will be available for global use following the YOG.

In addition, the IOC Medical Commission is planning Phase 2 of this project for 2011 to include a similar program for the older athlete and a program specifically aimed at sport organizations to educate and facilitate the adoption of prevention policies and codes of conduct. These projects will serve to better protect the athlete and to provide a respectful and healthy sporting environment.

Female athlete triad

In 2006, the IOC held a Consensus meeting addressing the female athlete triad; a health issue facing many female athletes of all ages (IOC, 2005). This document outlines the context of the problem in sport stemming from the pressures on female athletes to meet unrealistic weight or body fat levels. This can result in disordered eating or clinical eating disorders which can lead to an energy imbalance where the energy intake is inadequate to meet energy expenditures. The consequence of this energy deficit is disturbances of the reproductive system (low oestrogen) and subsequent bone mass depletion. The elite child athlete is specifically addressed in this document as the pubertal female athlete is dependent on the presence of oestrogen to optimize the increases in bone length, mineral content and epiphyseal plate closure that occur at this life stage. Inadequate energy balance can result in impaired growth, delayed maturation, menstrual disturbance and impaired athletic performance. The document also addresses specific concerns of the adult female athlete and outlines preventative strategies. The principle of early identification is emphasized along with multi-disciplinary treatment recommendations.

Hungry for Gold

In response to the prevalence and serious consequences of the female athlete triad (Triad) in elite youth athletes, the IOC Medical Commission decided to also include an educational component on the Triad in the Cultural and Educational Program of the YOG. The inclusion of this topic is based on the knowledge that the:

- ... health implications for the female athlete triad are significant and lifelong
- ... youth athlete is particularly vulnerable to the pressures in aesthetic sport to be thin.
- ... youth athlete is in a developmental period where attitudes towards body image are formed.
- ... youth athlete is in the period of critical bone acquisition and thus is vulnerable to lifelong bone health issues if nutritional requirements are not met in this time period.

Four videos of 3-5 minutes duration have been produced to address this topic including:

- a. *Anezka Ruzicka*: a Ukrainian gymnast suffering from anorexia nervosa
- b. *Aiko Hayashi*: a Japanese pair skater who was forced to retire due to the health consequences of bulimia nervosa
- c. *Jimmy Nelson*: the American father of Jessie Lee who succumbs to the health consequences of unhealthy weight loss practices in wrestling
- d. *Akeyo Abasi*: a Kenyan long distance runner who develops the female athlete triad and its subsequent health consequences.

These videos will be available through the IOC website in September 2010.

Body composition and performance

In 2007, the IOC created an ad-hoc working group to address the research issues related to the female athlete triad. This group is tasked with the mandate of supporting research in the area of body composition with the ultimate goal of presenting recommendations to International Federations on changes to sport rules to decrease the risk of developing the female athlete triad. One example is the response of the International Ski Federation (FIS) to the issue of unhealthy weight loss in the elite ski jumpers. Athletes are now required to be officially weighed at the beginning of the event and the lighter athletes are mandated to use a longer ski to minimize the advantage of their light weight. This rule change thereby decreases the performance need for unhealthy sub-normal weights. This group is addressing aesthetic sports, weight classification sports and sports where sport attire may be an influencing factor.

Injury prevention

In recent years, the IOC has focussed on prevention programs for injuries and diseases. In 2009, four research centres of excellence in four different continents were established to develop knowledge of risk factors for injuries and modifications for prevention. Many studies on the effect of prevention programs for children and adolescents have been published by these centres. In 2009, the IOC established a co-operation with the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* which publishes quarterly Injury Prevention and Health Protection issues highlighting research in this area. The IOC is also running through the medical department and Olympic Solidarity, sports medicine courses worldwide where current concepts of athlete health protection is highlighted.

Age determination

International sporting events for youth athletes have increased in number and importance in recent years. Situations in sport have arisen where underage athletes have competed in sports where late maturers are advantaged (gymnastics). At the other end of the spectrum, athletes have been discovered whose chronological age is greater than that of their official documents to gain a perceived physical advantage over their younger peers. The IOC held a Consensus Meeting in 2009 to address this issue in light of the upcoming 1st YOG to be held in 2010 (Engebretson *et al.*, 2010). The development and use of appropriate methods for determining age is not only necessary to ensure a level playing field, but also to protect the health and safety of the adolescent athlete. Hormonal markers, X-ray and ultrasound evaluation are not reliable methods of age determination. MRI measurement of the wrist has been validated in football less than 17 years of age and thus requires further investigation before it can be applied reliably in sport.

Disorders of sexual development (DSD)

As two of the mandates of the IOC Medical Commission are to ensure equality for all competing athletes and to respect medical and sport ethics, the IOC held a meeting in January 2010 to

address the health issue of athletes with DSD. The challenge in sport arises from the ethical controversy when a female athlete with DSD is competing in women's events with a real or perceived performance advantage from high levels of endogenous androgenic hormone. This meeting concluded with seven recommendations aimed at ensuring ethical fairness and equality for all athletes:

- That sport authorities, in conjunction with the relevant medical authorities, have a responsibility to follow up on cases of DSD that arise under their jurisdiction
- That there be an increase in education and awareness of DSD within the sport community
- That PPHE (pre participation health examinations) are important for the purpose of identifying athletes with DSD
- That precise diagnosis should be established expeditiously utilizing requisite expertise
- That a management plan be drawn up if treatment is necessary (recommended)
- To establish strategically located centres of excellence at which athletes with DSD can, if necessary, be diagnosed and treated
- That rules be put in place to determine eligibility of athletes for sport competition on a case-by-case basis both prior to and following diagnosis of a DSD including when an athlete is undergoing treatment for DSD or refuses treatment for a DSD.

These guidelines not only serve to protect the health of the athlete with DSD, but also serve to ensure fair and ethical sporting competition for athletes of all ages.

Youth Olympic Games (YOG)

As outlined previously, President Rogge is concerned with the health and welfare of children. As a result, the IOC has developed the Youth Olympic Games. The first edition is to be held in Singapore in August 2010 and will host 3500 summer athletes from around the world. The first winter edition will be held in Innsbruck in 2012. The objectives of the YOG are to:

- 1) prepare a generation of young elite athletes to have an ethical approach to sport, with strong values ... and principles
- 2) educate young people on the importance of sport for their health and their social integration
- 3) inform young people about the risks linked to sport

As such, the athletes attending this event will experience a Cultural and Educational Program that will outline the ideals and principles of Olympism in a youth oriented, interactive and culturally sensitive format. There will be a focus on education, arts/culture and media with topics addressing eight identified themes. Two themes address the health of the athlete: well-being and healthy lifestyle, and risks in sport

The IOC Medical Commission has developed educational projects outlined above for the "Well-being and healthy lifestyle" theme and the World Anti-Doping Association has developed a learning tool for the "Risks in sport" theme. Attention to child protection issues and youth friendly competition formats will be emphasised.

Summary

Over the past ten years, the IOC Medical Commission has developed many projects directly focussed on the preservation of the health of the elite child athlete. Through these initiatives, it is evident that the IOC values the health and well-being of the future Olympians as well as the youth of the world.

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PART 3: BEHAVIOURAL PARAMETERS

Chapter 4: *Developing physical fitness and talent in elite child athletes*

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Overview

Developing the fitness of children is often a primary goal of those working with youth athletes. However, time spent on physical conditioning may be disproportionate given the multidimensional nature of sports performance and physical conditioning may be pursued at the expense of psycho-sociological development. There is also a real possibility that those involved in the conditioning of youth athletes are adhering to a developmental model that lacks validity. In the UK all of the major national governing bodies have been asked to adopt a version of the Long-Term Athlete Development model. This model focuses on physical development throughout childhood, proposing 'windows of opportunity' exist where the development of discrete fitness qualities can be maximised with training. Furthermore, it is suggested that failure to exploit these windows will limit future athletic potential. Whilst such a model provides some structure with which to approach the conditioning of youth athletes, it is a completely theoretical model that lacks supporting empirical evidence. Consequently, the widespread adoption of this model could be exposing child athletes to unnecessary training loads, which may not be necessary for the majority of sports, might not increase future potential and might be implemented at the expense of technical, tactical, social and psychological development.

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model

It is now widely accepted that children can safely and effectively engage in physical training, provided that any such training is appropriately structured and supervised (Behm *et al.*, 2008; Faigenbaum and Myer, 2010; Faigenbaum *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the physical conditioning of youth athletes is promoted as a necessary process; for instance the Australian Strength and Conditioning Association recently released a position stand (2007) in which they recommend that children involved in competitive sport undertake resistance training and that this training could start when a child is as young as 6 years old. Much of the focus on physical conditioning in young athletes stems from the observation or perception that physical fitness will be a key determinant of success. However, the relative importance of physical fitness varies significantly across different athletic disciplines and factors other than physical fitness will also contribute to success. Even though it is accepted that developing elite talent is a multidisciplinary process (Burgess and Naughton, 2010; Phillips *et al.*, 2010) talent development models tend to follow a mono-disciplinary perspective. The long-term athlete development model (LTAD) proposed by Balyi and co-workers (2000, 2002, 2004) has gained considerable popularity, with all of the main governing bodies for sport in the UK adopting this model (Bailey *et al.*, 2010). The LTAD model focuses on the development of physical fitness throughout childhood and there is a danger that the implementation of this model will marginalise the importance of social and psychological development of elite child athletes, and will potentially impose unduly large

physical conditioning training loads on these athletes. It is also acknowledged that the LTAD model is a completely theory driven model and lacks supporting empirical evidence, therefore the widespread adoption of this model is surprising. This paper will review evidence relating to the physical development of elite child athletes in relation to the LTAD model.

In response to the underperformance of Canada in the Olympic Games Balyi and co-workers (2000, 2002, 2004) identified inappropriate strategies for developing youth athletes as a possible causative factor. The authors addressed this issue by providing a structured approach with which coaches could develop talent. The model is proposed to be a participation model that provides a pathway into elite talent development, providing all children with the opportunity to develop their physical abilities. Central to this model is the development of physical fitness abilities throughout childhood and the concept that children will be more sensitive to certain training stimuli at different stages of their growth and development. The authors identify what they term 'windows of opportunity', where a child would be most responsive to a given training stimulus and the authors state that a failure to maximise these windows will limit future potential. Such a statement, without any supporting empirical evidence, seems inappropriate and other authors have questioned whether such windows exist and whether adhering to this philosophy would actually improve future performance or just allow a child to reach their genetic potential at a faster rate (Bailey *et al.*, 2010). A potentially more worrying concern is exposing the elite child athlete to unnecessary and excessively high physical training loads. For instance, Balyi and co-workers (2000, 2002, 2004) suggest that children should engage in less competition and that the focus should be placed on developmental goals. Whilst this appears a sensible suggestion it is somewhat undermined by the context in which the information is given, whereby emphasis is shifted from competition to physical conditioning. Within the LTAD model the ages of approximately 11-16 are proposed as the 'training-to-train' stage. This phase reflects the adolescent years and is identified as the key time in which to develop physical fitness traits such as speed, endurance and strength. Thus, it is likely that coaches implementing this model will be compelled to expose young adolescent child athletes to training primarily designed to develop these fitness components. Unfortunately, there is little evidence available on the training loads of child athletes following the LTAD pathway. Concentrating the training of an elite child athlete around physical conditioning specific to their chosen sport reflects a form of early specialisation and consequently, such an approach may be associated with the negative effects of early specialisation, which can impede physical, social and psychological development (Baker, 2003; Baker *et al.*, 2009). Previously Bailey *et al.*, (2010) have questioned whether the misuse of "windows of opportunity" within the LTAD model will lead to an increased likelihood of detrimental effects on adult participation.

Natural development and trainability

It is clear that development during childhood is non-linear. This is most easily observed for stature, with growth rates changing throughout childhood. Similarly, various components of fitness have been shown to improve in a non-linear way throughout childhood (Malina *et al.*, 2004). Such improvements are underpinned by the natural development of neural, metabolic,

hormonal and structural properties. In a comprehensive review Viru *et al.* (1999) documented the natural development of physical fitness during childhood. The authors identified a common trend across different fitness components with what were termed a preadolescent and adolescent spurt in performance; reflecting two periods where there was a more rapid improvement in performance. The preadolescent spurt was attributed to neural development around this time, whereas the adolescent spurt was associated with the maturation of the endocrine system and release of associated hormones. Balyi and co-workers (2000, 2002, 2004) used much of this information for their LTAD model by making the assumption that a system is most sensitive to manipulation (from training, for instance) during a period of rapid natural development. This assumption highlights a lack of validity in the current LTAD model as it is not based on any empirical evidence of training gains made in childhood, but is based on the natural development of children from a general population taken to infer something about trainability. Structuring the training of child athletes around a model lacking validity can be heavily questioned.

Unfortunately, there is very little research currently published which has specifically investigated the trainability of individuals varying in age and maturation. However, there is a large body of empirical evidence available which suggests that all aspects of physical fitness are trainable at all stages of development; meaning that children of any age or maturation can make training gains. Importantly, it is also clear that individuals can still make training gains well into adulthood. Trainability of aerobic power during childhood has probably received the most attention within the literature. In a review article Baquet *et al.* (2003) compared experimental articles that examined training gains in aerobic power during childhood. The authors reported training gains were of a similar magnitude across pre, circum and post-pubertal populations, suggesting that any windows of opportunity do not exist. This is in contrast to the claims of Balyi and co-workers (2000, 2002, 2004), who suggest that endurance should be developed around the age of peak height velocity as this reflects a time of rapid natural adaptations to the cardiovascular system (increased heart size and blood volume). From considering the theory and the available research it seems reasonable to conclude that some components of fitness are best developed at certain stages of development, whereas for other components the evidence is less clear. Skill and movement techniques seem to be best learnt at a young age when the central nervous system is rapidly developing, whereas achieving hypertrophic gains in muscle mass is only likely following the onset of sexual maturation and the release of circulating androgens. Other aspects of fitness (speed, strength, power, endurance) all seem trainable throughout childhood, although the adaptations that underpin any training induced gains are likely to differ with age and maturation. What is not clear is how elite child athletes respond to physical conditioning compared to their non-elite counterparts. Genetic factors that predispose a child to achieving elite status could facilitate any training responses; alternatively the accumulation of a significant amount of previous training history may blunt the training response. Future research is needed to establish the factors that contribute to and control the magnitude of training gains experience by elite child athletes.

How important is physical fitness?

The link between physical fitness and competitive performance may seem obvious, with those athletes who are bigger, faster and stronger than their counterparts perceived to be more likely to achieve success; whether or not this is the case will be largely determined by the sport in question. The ability of measures of physical fitness to distinguish between athletes who do and do not achieve success could be viewed as a continuum from those sports that are heavily reliant on body size and physiological fitness (e.g. sprinting, running, cycling, rowing), to those sports primarily reliant on greater technical skill (e.g. golf, archery). For instance, it has been shown that anthropometric and physiological measures can provide very strong predictions of rowing performance in children (Mikulic and Ruzic, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that these measures are used for talent identification purposes and that training aims to improve these factors (where possible). In a study examining which factors distinguish between elite and non-elite child football players, Reilly *et al.* (2000) reported the most distinguishing factors to be agility, sprint performance, ego orientation and anticipation skill; these factors reflect a range of physical and psychological characteristics. However, talent identification and development programmes in football are likely to focus attention towards physical fitness (Burgess and Naughton, 2010). There may also be components of fitness that do not distinguish between competitive standards but that do contribute to success. For example, in football it is accepted that outfield players will need an aerobic power of at least 60 mL/kg/min to allow them to compete at an elite level. This does not represent a remarkable level of aerobic fitness but rather a threshold value as a prerequisite to progress. An obvious issue is that a more mature child is likely to reach these threshold values at an earlier age and will consequently be given more opportunity to progress to the elite level when compared to their less mature counterparts. Sports which structure the training of youth athletes around the development of physical fitness may overplay the importance of fitness while underplaying the importance of other developmental factors. It has been noted that whilst the physiological requirements of elite sports may differ markedly the psychological characteristics associated with achieving an elite status are consistent across sporting disciplines (Abbot and Collins, 2004), supporting the need to successfully develop these characteristics in youth athletes.

Key issues

There may be a disproportionate focus on the physical development of elite child athletes, which could occur at the expense of other important developmental considerations (technical, tactical, social and psychological). The emphasis on physical development of child athletes is likely to have been fostered by the widespread adoption of the Balyi LTAD model. Whilst this model has provided some structure for national governing bodies and coaches, to adhere to the predominance of physical conditioning in the model may impede the holistic development of child athletes. Furthermore, the LTAD model lacks validity and its implementation may not achieve the stated goals of increasing future/adult sporting potential. It is clear that fitness is trainable throughout childhood, although some aspects (skill and hypertrophy) may be more adaptable at certain stages of development. Before designing training programmes for child athletes there needs to be a clear justification of the need and extent to which fitness needs to

be developed, which will be dependent on the sport engaged in and the individuals current fitness level and developmental status.

Messages

Physical development of child athletes may be required in order to achieve success at the elite level. However, other factors may be equally, or more, important and any training programme needs to take a holistic approach to maximise development and potential. The relative importance of physical, technical, tactical, social and psychological factors in determining success will vary according to the sport and should be considered when designing an athlete development programme. Placing too much emphasis on physical conditioning during childhood may have negative consequences in terms of physical, social and psychological development. Relying on specific 'windows of opportunity' during childhood when certain aspects of fitness can be developed with training is not supported by empirical evidence and may constrain programme design (and athlete development). Furthermore, suggesting that exploiting such windows will increase future sporting potential is an unfounded assumption.

Future research

Given the widespread adoption of the LTAD model, empirical evidence is required to either support or refute the claims made by this model; specifically research needs to identify whether the age or maturation of the child influences their responsiveness to training and whether any training gains made at a young age increase the ceiling for potential at an adult level (although this latter point is very difficult to research). Research is required to objectively quantify the training loads that elite child athletes are currently exposed to and to analyse the amount and quality of training that is dedicated to physical, technical, tactical, social and psychological development. Multidisciplinary research is required to establish the relative contribution of physical fitness to achieving success at an elite senior level, to allow more informed decisions to be made about developing talent in young athletes.

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Chapter 5: *Physical and emotional abuse of elite child athletes: The case of forced physical exertion*

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Overview

As sport is considered to be a highly child-populated domain, one would surmise that empirically-based athlete protection measures would exist to reduce the potential for abusive and neglectful experiences of young participants. It is only recently that concern has been established about athletes' experiences of relational forms of abuse including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (Kerr and Stirling, 2008): however, advocacy for athlete protection has long existed. Similar to the evolution of child protection initiatives in society, concern for the maltreatment of young athletes and advocacy for athlete and child protection in sport has also been derived from several historical and contextual contributions. This chapter reviews some of the areas of inquiry related to the protection of children in sport including criticism of the highly competitive climate of youth sport, normalisation of violence in children's sport, and concerns for the development of elite child athletes. The concept of abuse is defined, with a particular emphasis on defining emotional and physical abuse in sport. Finally, the issue of forced physical exertion is introduced and its placement within the abuse paradigm is discussed.

The competitive climate of elite youth sport

One of the strongest criticisms of children's participation in sport has been the prevailing climate of competition that characterises the majority of organized youth sports. In the early 1970s, Terry Orlick conducted several examinations of children's sport participation and reported that over-emphasis on winning outcomes in youth sport decreases the enjoyment of child participants (Orlick, 1972; 1973; Orlick and Botterill, 1975). Ogilvie (1979, p. 50) stated, "The motivational force of being evaluated for grading, drafting, and other forms of external judgments begins to take precedence over more wholesome motives." Similarly, Pooley (1986) suggested that within the competitive sport model, too much early pressure on competition leads to burn-out and withdrawal from sport among children.

The emphasis on winning performances has also been criticized for the many consequences it can have on the athletes' psychological well-being. Competitiveness negates/challenges the notion of innocence, unselfconsciousness, and the imminent, sentimental value of children that remain central to contemporary constructions of childhood ... Who and what children are (or should be) in these constructions stand essentially at odds with dominant discourses and images of fierce competition, winning at all costs, and winning for winning's sake (Cook and Cole, 2001, p. 227).

Martens (1978) suggested that competitive sport can negatively affect the mental health of child athletes as evident in significant levels of reported stress. Passer (1983) reported that some children in sport experience considerable performance and evaluation-related worries. Likewise, Scanlan (1986) cited that sources of stress experienced by young athletes include high competition anxiety, worries about failure, and fears of evaluation.

Concern for the abuse of child athletes within this competitive sport model has also emerged. Orlick (1986, p. 171) suggested that the winning-centred philosophies that predominate in children's sport can create situations for child abuse.

You can walk into an arena, gym, pool, or onto a field any day of the week and still see abuses in children's sport. Adults still scream at kids, and in many programs, winning is still a priority in children's games.

Highlighting the particular ways in which competitive sport makes young athletes vulnerable to abuse, Cook and Cole (2001) explained that when the goal of winning overshadows other reasons for participating in sport, the participant is lost and the child quickly becomes an instrument of status to be trained and disciplined to fulfill a particular role. Once this shift in identity occurs, the athlete is no longer viewed as an individual with personal needs and rights, but rather as a tool to be used in the pursuit of sporting success, therefore placing the athlete in a position of vulnerability to abuse. Similarly, Donnelly (1993, p. 114) stated: "... the body has become an instrument, an object to be worked on, trained, tuned, and otherwise manipulated in order to achieve performance." Those close to the athlete (coaches, trainers, commentators) and even athletes themselves refer to the athlete's body as if it or the performance it produces exists distinct from the person (in some cases even substituting for the person). Detachment of the body and its performance from the person legitimizes the use of drugs and other techniques, even violation and abuse, in the name of improved performance. As well, Tofler and DiGeronimo (2000) explained that potentially abusive situations can result when adults lose their ability to differentiate their own needs and goals for success from that of the child.

At this level the child is at risk of becoming an objectified and exploited instrument of the adult's goals. These goals are pursued with little regard for short- and long-term physical and emotional morbidity or even mortality. (p. 24)

Furthermore, it has been suggested that as pressures to win in sport increase, not only are athletes depersonalized in their sporting environment, but the competitive nature of sport encourages them to do whatever it takes to achieve success: "The greater emphasis on winning will increasingly mean to win at any price" (Crone, 1999, p. 321). Bringer, Brackenridge and Johnston (2001) explained that the highly competitive culture of sport places athletes at risk for abuse. Once competitive athletes are willing to do anything in order to achieve their goals, their vulnerability for abuse is increased by normalizing and justifying various processes they believe will help them attain this goal.

Athletes learn to subject themselves to anything that might assist them in pursuit of medals ... Ultimately, these behaviours contribute to an environment that normalizes abuse and disempowers athletes. (p. 229)

Normalisation of violence in elite youth sport

Analogous to the research on the competitive climate of children's sport, and the drive to endure whatever it takes to win, is the literature suggesting an increasing acceptance of violence and aggression in this environment (Smith, 1975). For example, children's risk for injury and the problems of violence in contact sports such as hockey have been reported widely (Smith, 1974; 1979; Tator and Edmonds, 1984; Vaz, 1982). A fair play strategy has been recommended to help decrease the injuries of children that result from penalties and unnecessary contact:

The fair-play concept of scoring ice hockey games, seasons, or tournaments was developed in response to the perceived increase in violence in youth hockey ... the system decreases penalties, intimidation, and violence during hockey and creates a climate that promotes fun and player development. (AAP, 2000, p. 658)

Orlick (1972; 1973) also reported the need for rule changes, equipment modifications, and changes to the nature of sport in order to reduce the degree of violence and enhance the enjoyment of children's participation.

In addition to concerns for the acute injury of children in contact sport, there has also been an emerging concern for chronic overuse injuries in young athletes (Harvey, 1986). Similarly, Personne (1995; cited in Maes, 2004) reported that 40% of gymnasts ages 6 – 10 suffer regularly from tendonitis, 83 % of the top European junior gymnasts have abnormalities of the radius, and in America, two surgeons operated on 26 shoulders of 14 promising swimmers. Subsequent concern has been expressed about the legality of this risk to injury in youth sport.

In no other occupation or profession, even for adults, would the high rate of burnout, the high rate of overuse injuries, the serious potential for traumatic injury, [and] the serious possibility of long-term disability (i.e. arthritis or growth-plate damage), ... be allowed to pass without question. (Donnelly, 1997, p. 394)

It has also been suggested that these overuse injuries should constitute physical abuse in youth sport. Personne (1995) cites surgeons' opinions that the overuse syndrome which results in the shoulder surgeries of promising swimmers is a result of society-tolerated athletic abuse (Maes, 2004). Furthermore, David (2005) referred to chronic overuse injuries in youth sport as the physical exploitation of children, and stated:

Competitive sport can expose athletes to at least four types of physical abuse and violence: excessive intensive training; peer violence; physical violence by adults, including corporal punishment; and violence due to participation in competitions. (p. 63)

Criticisms are thus raised about the methods used to develop elite child athletes.

Based on in-depth interviews with 45 recently retired high performance athletes and a number of documentary and informal sources of data, Donnelly (1993) discussed the many problems associated with youth involvement in high-performance sport, including troubled family relationships, problems in social relationships, educational problems, physical and psychological problems, excessive out-of-control partying behaviour, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, dietary problems, issues with politics in sport, and problems associated with retirement. Donnelly (1993) also discussed the vulnerability of elite child athletes to inappropriate behaviours within the coach-athlete relationship, such as unwanted rubdowns, sexual advances, and domination of the body and coercion into unnecessary dieting. However, Donnelly (1993, p. 105) admitted:

Although, apparently unhealthy and overly dependent relationships may be relatively common [in children's high-performance sport], it is difficult to sensitively and accurately determine at what point coach-athlete relationships become abusive.

Likewise, David (2005, p. 53) stated: "There is a very thin line that divides intensive training that allows children to fulfill themselves from that in which they are abused and exploited." As well, Coakley (2001, p. 117) expressed concern that there are no enforceable standards regulating the treatment of children in sport, thus placing child athletes in a position of vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. In 1995, sports columnist Joan Ryan wrote *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes* which storied the abusive experiences of elite child gymnasts and figure skaters. Although the evidence gathered for this book was anecdotal, it was based on nearly one hundred interviews and brought to light some of the problems associated with early elite athlete development and the need for protecting child athletes in this environment.

The bottom line is clear: there have been enough suicide attempts, enough eating disorders, enough broken bodies, enough regretful parents and enough bitter young women to warrant a serious re-evaluation of what is done to produce Olympic champions. Those who work in these sports know the tragedies all too well. If the federations and coaches truly care about the athletes and not simply about the fame and prestige that comes from trotting tough little champions up to the medal stand, they know it is past time to lay the problems on the table, examine them and work out a way to keep their sports from damaging so many young lives. But since those charged with protecting young athletes so often fail in their responsibility, it is time the government drops the fantasy that certain sports are merely games and takes a hard look at legislation aimed at protecting elite child athletes, (Ryan, 1995, p. 14).

Collectively, the research presented above has led several theorists to question at which point may training become abusive? One of the first steps to addressing this question is to determine what constitutes or does not constitute abuse in sport.

Definition of abuse

Definitions of what constitutes or does not constitute abuse differ depending on the intended use of the definition. In general though, abuse is defined as a pattern of physical, sexual, emotional or negligent ill-treatment by a person in a caregiver capacity (i.e. parent, coach) resulting in actual or potential harm to the athlete (Stirling, 2009). Abuse is distinguished from other child maltreatments such as assault, harassment or bullying, in that it is a relational disorder and refers to a pattern of harmful behaviours that exists in a critical relationship role. A critical relationship is one in which the perpetrator is in a prescribed position of authority over the victim and has responsibility for the welfare of the victim in some capacity. As well, the victim depends on the perpetrator for his or her sense of safety, trust, and fulfilment of needs. Importantly, it is the pattern of behaviours that constitutes abuse. The same behaviours experienced by an individual in isolation, on a single occasion or in the absence of other harmful behaviours, or outside of a caregiver relationship would not constitute abuse.

Specific definitions of abuse can vary depending on whether it is used for identification of abuse in cases of legal prosecution, clinical treatment, or behavioural prevention. These definitions often differ in their use of the term 'harm' with, for example, criteria of harm being more severe in legal definitions of abuse compared to definitions used in clinical treatment or behavioural prevention. In addition to issues of severity, identification of abuse can also differ depending on whether 'harm' is defined as resultant or potential harm. In the treatment of abuse, clinicians identify an abusive relationship based on the outcome or presence of 'harm' resulting from behaviours in the relationship. However, in order to advance the identification and prevention of abuse, behaviourists identify those practices within a relationship that have the potential to cause harm. As such abuse has been determined by both the behaviour itself (those behaviours that have the potential to cause harm) (Paavilainen and Tarkka, 2003) as well as the outcome of a particular behaviour (those behaviours that lead to the resultant harm) (Iwaniec, 2003).

The four major recognized types of abuse include; physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (Crooks and Wolfe, 2007). Neglect is distinct from the other abuses as in cases of neglect the harmful behaviour is not executed intentionally by the perpetrator. Conversely, in cases of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse, while the perpetration may not intend to cause harm, the behaviour that causes harm is executed intentionally. The difference then between sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse is the type of harm or type of potential harm that is experienced from that relationship. Sexual abuse is defined as "any sexual interaction with person(s) of any age that is perpetrated (1) against the victim's will, (2) without consent, or (3) in an aggressive, exploitative, manipulative, or threatening manner" (Ryan and Lane, 1997, p. 3). Physical and emotional abuses, the focus of the remainder of the paper, are defined as a pattern of deliberate behaviours by a person within a critical relationship role that has the potential to be harmful to an individual's physical and emotional well-being, respectively. Examples of physically and emotionally abusive behaviours in sport are presented in Table 5.1.

Research in sport indicates that athletes are not immune from experiences of athlete maltreatment (Fasting, Brackenridge and Sundgot-Borgen, 2003). The preponderance of literature on abuse in sport has addressed sexual abuse (Brackenridge, 1977; 2001; Fasting, Brackenridge and Sundgot-Borgen, 2003; Leahy, Pretty and Tenenbaum, 2002): however, more recent literature has emerged on emotional abuse of athletes by their coaches (Gervis and Dunn, 2004; Gravely and Cochran, 1995; Stirling and Kerr, 2007, 2008). Curiously, at the present time, no empirical research exists on physical abuse and neglect in sport. The next section will address one specific, potential form of abuse in sport, namely, forced physical exertion.

The case of forced physical exertion (FPE)

The issue of forced physical exertion is a new and emerging concept both in sport and in society generally. At present, no official definition of forced physical exertion in sport has been presented. In an attempt to describe the concept, it is suggested that when commonly used training methods of physical conditioning in sport are used as punishment, this may constitute a form of abuse, namely forced physical exertion. Or, when an athlete is forced to endure training methods of physical conditioning in excess, beyond reasonably foreseeable training benefits, and to a point in which the exercise has the potential to be harmful, forced physical exertion may be experienced. Potential examples of forced physical exertion may include ordering an athlete to run laps because she or he has arrived late for practice or commanding “wind sprints until you drop” for a disappointing performance. Having athletes train to the point of vomiting or forcing a child to do push-ups alone in front of a group because she or he performed poorly may also be examples of forced physical exertion in sport.

Table 5.1 Physically and emotionally abusive behaviours in sport

Form of abuse	Example
Physical abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Punching, beating, kicking, biting, shoving, striking, shaking, throwing, choking, burning, or slapping ● Hitting an athlete with sporting equipment ● Requiring an athlete to remain motionless in a seated or plank position for a period of time beyond reasonable training demands ● Forcing an athlete to kneel on a harmful surface ● Isolating an athlete in a confined space
Emotional abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demeaning comments ● Acts of humiliation ● Intimidating or threatening acts of aggression with no athlete contact (i.e. throwing equipment against a wall) ● Intentional denial of attention and/or support ● Chronic expulsion from training or competition

Source: Adapted from Stirling (2009)

It is important to emphasize that physical exertion is inherent to sport; the development of fitness and skills depend upon it. Moreover, it is the coach's role, in part, to encourage athletes to push themselves out of their 'comfort zone' in order to become more fit or skilled. The question of how we distinguish between legitimate physical exertion, more commonly known in sport as 'conditioning', and exertion that is abusive, is an important question for researchers and practitioners. Additional questions to be posed are: How should FPE be defined? Is FPE harmful and if so, under which conditions? What may be the short and long-term effects of FPE? In which contexts or circumstances should FPE be considered abusive?

As we lack definitional criteria for FPE, it will also be important, as this field of study progresses, to distinguish FPE from other related concepts such as discipline and punishment. It would appear that most cases of forced physical exertion occur within a context of punishment – in other words, forcing athletes to excessively exert themselves to “teach them a lesson.” Although attempts have been made to distinguish between physical punishment and physical abuse in terms of degree, force, intent or even extent of injury, these attempts have not been successful (Durrant, 2002). Considerable evidence exists demonstrating that most cases of physical abuse result from disciplinary-related actions taken by caregivers or occur within the context of disciplinary interactions. Furthermore, Health Canada recognizes that “child physical abuse is usually connected to physical punishment or is confused with child discipline.” (Health Canada, 2001). From the standpoint of risk or potential for harm, physical abuse and physical punishment cannot be distinguished (Durrant, 2002). The questions before us therefore, are when and under which conditions does the use of physical conditioning cross from a disciplinary behaviour to an abusive one? And, who or what determines this?

If we determine that forced physical exertion constitutes a form of abuse in sport how might it be categorized? Forced physical exertion may be considered a form of physical abuse as the behaviours implemented (e.g. physical exercise) are of a physical nature and the effects of these behaviours are physical (e.g. physical pain and discomfort). But it is also possible that forced physical exertion is a form of emotional abuse given that it may be used to control athletes and to intimidate, demean or denigrate, and to cause fear and submission. Exploring coaches' and athletes' perceptions of the use and effects of forced physical exertion may inform the categorization of forced physical exertion within the abuse paradigm.

Overall, this review represents a few of the many inter-related temporal developments in sport that have contributed to research and advocacy in the area of athlete protection. The concept of forced physical exertion has been introduced and proposed as a potential form of athlete maltreatment. Future research on forced physical exertion in sport is needed to better understand definitional issues, the behavioural operationalisation of the concept, the categorization of FPE within the abuse paradigm, coaches' intentions in using these behaviours and the perceived effects of forced physical exertion on athletes' well-being and performance.

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Chapter 6: *The elite child athlete and injury risk*

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Overview

This chapter reviews the research evidence which confirms the normalisation of injury-risk in achievement sports, and the consequences of this for elite child athletes. Issues considered include the pressures to conform to a 'culture of risk' in sports which compromises the well-being of young athletes. Such pressures may come from strategic performance-oriented sports systems, significant personnel in the sporting environment, media role models, and the creation of complex gendered identities during adolescence. While there are examples of 'good practice', it is argued that these need to be shared more widely, and that a review should be undertaken of what constitutes appropriate training and competition for young athletes. Importantly, the voice of the elite child athlete also needs to be enabled to ensure a balance between liberalist and paternalist discourses in the search to protect their wellbeing while they pursue their sporting ambitions.

Injury risks in sports: The social context

Since the 1980s, sociologists of sport have increasingly critically evaluated the assumption of a positive relationship between physical activity and health, in particular examining the phenomena of injury-risk in sporting contexts. These studies have examined the causes and lived experiences of, and social responses to, injury. Their findings identify and confirm that athletes all too frequently normalise injury and other forms of ill-health, prioritising sports performance efficiency over their well-being (Howe, 2001; Nixon, 1992; Pike, 2005; Pike and Maguire, 2003; Roderick *et al.*, 2000; Sabo, 1986; Waddington, 2000; Young, 2004b). As Young (2004a) argues:

In many sports and at many levels, sport is also about learning to live with pain and hurt and, for a disconcertingly large number of athletes, injury and disablement that can last well beyond the playing years. Of the sundry badly kept secrets from the world of sport, this is surely among the worst. (p. xi)

A central dimension of the work of sociologists of sport is to gain an understanding of the cultural context in which athletes routinely, and often unquestioningly, risk their bodies for their sport. This has been described by various authors as a 'culture of risk' (Frey, 1991; Hughes and Coakley, 1991; Nixon, 1992), within which athletes 'over-conform' to norms of a sporting ethic which makes them willing to play in pain, return from injury before they are fully recovered, and vilify other athletes who do not conform to such expectations (Hughes and Coakley, 1991). The pressures to do so may be both internal and external - the personal desire to express a sporting identity which includes having the ability to tolerate pain, and external pressures from individuals and social norms.

When examining the internal pressures, much of the early literature linked the acceptance of pain and toleration of risk to dominant codes of masculinity and what it means to 'be a man' (Messner, 1990; Sabo, 1986; Young, 1993). More recent studies have identified that female athletes may also over-conform to risk-tolerant cultures in a process of complex gender work as they manage their dual, and sometimes contradictory, identities as both 'athlete' and 'female' (Charlesworth and Young, 2004; Pike and Maguire, 2003; Theberge, 2000). In his study entitled 'Warrior Girls', Sokolove (2009) suggests that there may be an injury epidemic in girls sports, given that they suffer injury at greater rates than boys, and in the case of anterior cruciate ligament tears as much as eight-times the rates of boys playing the same sports. External pressures to engage in such risk-taking behaviours may come from significant others within the sports culture (coaches, team-mates, supporters) and also from media coverage which frequently conveys the idea that violence and injury-risk are desirable behaviours (Nixon, 1993).

All of these pressures are particularly significant for young athletes, whose sports participation is often subject to considerable control by these 'others' and who are also susceptible to images and behaviours of sporting role models and their mediated pain and injury. Despite this, the physically and emotionally painful ramifications of injury, and the ways in which sport may be abusive, for young athletes remains under-explored (Donnelly, 2003). This chapter attempts to make a contribution to redressing this balance but does so recognising that one reason why this may be an under-researched area is that there is something of a pariah status for those who might suggest that engagement in sports may be anything less than an unequivocally positive experience. This is particularly so as the UK prepares to host the world's most high profile sporting events in 2012, with a central legacy plan of increasing the numbers of people - especially young people - actively participating in sporting activities.

The elite child athlete and injury risk factors

It is difficult to determine precisely how many elite child athletes are injured as a result of their sporting involvement. Indeed, the data regarding overall injury-rates in sports is limited. However, it does appear to be the case that accident and injury rates are highest in the younger age groups (Donnelly, 2004), and David (2005) suggests that approximately 20 per cent of children involved in competitive sports are at risk of some form of abuse or exploitation, including becoming injured. In the United States, it is estimated that 3.5million children aged under 14 receive medical treatment for sports injuries each year at a cost of approximately \$2.5billion per year (National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 2004; Powell and Barber Foss, 1999). In the United Kingdom, best-guess estimates of sport-related injury rates in England and Wales suggest approximately 29.7 million injuries each year, at a cost of £30 per person per year (Nichols *et al.*, 1994). If we take a snap-shot of one sport, approximately one-third of professional footballers have undergone surgery for injuries at a cost of £40 million per year (Hawkins and Fuller, 1998; White, 2004), and elite child footballers have more injuries, and are five times more likely to have multiple injuries, than elite child performers in other sports, often as a result of financial pressures on football clubs to return their star players to the pitch before full rehabilitation (Mafulli *et al.*, 2005).

The main causes of these injuries appear to be early specialisation in specific sports and over-training immature bones, along with insufficient rest after injury and poor training or conditioning. When comparing these causes with the definition of an elite child athlete, it is easy to identify the potential for high risk of injury. An elite child athlete, as defined by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) “is one who has superior athletic talent, undergoes specialised training, receives expert coaching and is exposed to early competition” (Mountjoy *et al.*, 2008, p. 163). The IOC acknowledges that this creates the very conditions in which these children have an enhanced risk of overuse injuries, overtraining or ‘burnout’, and also disordered eating (Mountjoy *et al.*, 2008). Certainly there have been high-profile cases of athletes who engaged in intensive training and competition at a young age and were then seen to experience high levels of repetitive injury, in some cases leading to premature retirement, while still young: consider, for example, the tennis players Martina Hingis and Tracey Austin; and footballers such as Michael Owen and Steven Gerrard who trained through Football Association youth academies, achieved national selection, but are frequently on the sidelines with recurrent injuries.

To illustrate this point further, there are useful comparative case studies of sport systems where children are exposed to serious training schedules, with the concomitant pressures and expectations on their performance, from a very young age. In China, children as young as five may be selected to attend specialist sports schools where they will train for up to twelve hours per day if they are on the national sports teams (Hong, 2004). Donnelly (1997) discovered that ten-year old ice-hockey players may compete in as many as 90 games in a season. Evidence from the United States indicates that competitions for figure-skaters start as young as age three, while ten-year-old figure skaters may practice five times per day, five days of the week (Grenfell and Rinehart, 2003). Examples of the consequences of this are provided by Ryan (1996), who outlines the painful and short-lived careers of female ice-skaters and gymnasts in her book *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes*, including those who competed with broken bones, blood poisoning, and some who became paralysed and even died for their sport at very young ages. Perhaps one of the most famous examples is that of Olga Korbut, the former East German Olympic gold medallist in gymnastics, who was subjected to an extreme training regime and at the age of only 17 described how the lumbago in her back caused her to walk:

... as though I had a stake in my spine ... My strongest memories of that entire period are fatigue, pain, and the empty feeling of being a fly whose blood has been sucked out by a predatory spider. (Cited in Murphy and Waddington, 2007, p. 241)

It has been argued that such intensive and specialised training constitutes child abuse, as defined by the World Health Organization (1999), resulting as it so often does in harm to the child’s health and wellbeing (Farstad, 2007; Weber, 2009). In addition to the financial costs outlined above, the consequences of these injuries for children are lowered academic performance, increased risks for depression and smoking, reduced participation in sports and physical activity, and the potential for other health problems including osteoarthritis and obesity (National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 2004; Powell and Barber Foss, 1999).

The evidence that injury among elite child athletes is primarily caused by overuse and over-specialisation is of particular concern in the United Kingdom as the country prepares to host the 2012 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. In the first government Budget statement following the award of these Games to London, the then Chancellor Gordon Brown committed £500 million of public money to support increased and earlier training of young people to compete in the 2012 Olympics. This was a deliberate strategy to target young athletes who may be potential Olympic medal winners, as part of the vision to at least maintain the third place achieved in the medal table in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the second place achieved in the 2008 Paralympic Games, as well as aiming to sustain team and individual world rankings in the top five of identified 'popular' sports (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002; Sport England, 2004; UK Sport 2007). The strategy involved identifying potential world-class talent up to eight years before they would compete in the Games, and structuring their training, coaching, competition and scientific support to maximise their chances of success, in what was termed a 'No Compromise' approach (UK Sport, 2007). In other words, a strategy which is most likely to lead to increased injury-rates among elite child athletes (Coakley and Pike, 2009). A survey of injuries among Olympic athletes has identified that 10 per cent of athletes at the Beijing Games were injured, rising to 15 per cent in certain sports, with injuries reported in competitors as young as 15 years old (Junge *et al.*, 2009). In the UK, a review of athletes in Olympic and Paralympic sports was undertaken to compile evidence on injury and illness threats to elite level performers (Great Britain 2009 Injury/Illness Olympiad Review). However, at the time of writing, the findings of this review had not been released to the general public despite several requests following a public announcement that the review had been undertaken. As a result, the latest information on sports injury-rates in the UK is not known, and therefore it is not possible to make recommendations for improved practice based on the most recent evidence.

One final factor of significance for the elite child athlete is the way in which the media coverage of sports frequently promotes injurious risk-taking behaviours, including playing through pain and self-sacrifice in the interests of the team and competitive results, as normal, desirable and even heroic behaviour for young people aspiring to achieve the standard of the media role models (Coakley and Pike, 2009; Lines, 2001; Nixon, 1993). For example, when Wilmots, a Belgium footballer received a facial injury during the men's 2002 World Cup, the commentators stated that *"it adds to your bravery barometer having a blood-stained shirt"* (in Coakley and Pike, 2009). In tennis, Tracey Austin who herself retired from the sport at a young age due to injury was commentating on a game played during Wimbledon 2009 and stated of Leyton Hewitt *"what a great heart, I mean this is a guy that had hip surgery about a year ago and he's such a fighter, such a competitor, he loves it"*. Elsewhere, the 22-year-old British heptathlete Jessica Ennis was hailed as a "heroine" (*Daily Mirror*, August 17th 2009) and the "come back Queen" (*Daily Express*, August 17th 2009) for making a swift return to the sport to win the World Track and Field Championships having missed the Beijing 2008 Olympics with a serious foot injury. The mediation of the sport spectacle in this way merely contributes to the normalisation, and even celebration, of injury-risk, promoting performers who engage in such behaviours as a reference group for elite child athletes, and further problematising potential solutions to this issue.

Conclusions and recommendations

The process of making recommendations to reduce the likelihood of injury risk among elite child athletes is complicated by two main issues: first, there are some vagaries in the evidence available; and second there are theoretical debates regarding the paternalistic desire to protect the child contrasted with the liberalist position that children should have freedom to make their own decisions.

On the first point, whilst the IOC recognises that elite child athletes have special issues which need to be addressed, their recommendations are vague suggesting that elite child athletes deserve to train and compete in pleasurable and suitable environments, that there needs to be injury and illness surveillance programmes, and the volume and intensity of training and competition should be monitored (Mountjoy *et al.*, 2008). What is less clear is how these recommendations are implemented, enforced, or what processes will ensue to protect children for whom these conditions are not met.

Contributing to the opaqueness of the current position is the lack of information regarding the occurrence and causes of injury among elite child athletes. The reasons why the authors of the Great Britain 2009 Injury/Illness Olympiad Review will not reveal their findings is unknown. However, it seems crucial that this data should be released as a matter of urgency in order that policy-makers and others with a vested interest in these findings are able to use the survey results to inform improved health-care practice for athletes, particularly during the final two years of preparations for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. On a more positive note, the authors of this review have indicated that they do intend to use their findings to guide new injury prevention processes (Great Britain 2009 Injury/Illness Olympiad Review, 2009). Other initiatives worthy of mention include the European EUROSAFE taskforce for sports safety (www.eurosafe.eu.com); and, in the United States, a scheme entitled STOP (Sports Trauma and Overuse Prevention) is a national effort to educate athletes, coaches and others involved in sport for elite children what can be done to prevent sports injuries (www.stopsportsinjuries.org). Such programmes could usefully inform practice in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

On the second philosophical and ethical issue, there is also a debate as to whether children should have the same rights as adults - to have the freedom to decide what to do with their own bodies - or whether children should be regarded as unable to make rational and autonomous decisions and should be protected by adults making these choices for them (Farstad, 2007). In turn, this raises the issue of at what age children should be able to make such decisions and also at what age children should be exposed to intensive training and competition. Some sports governing bodies have introduced a minimum age for competition, and limit the number of tournaments that a young athlete may participate in but this does not necessarily prevent intensive training. Indeed, denying children the right to engage in intensive training may be viewed as discriminatory as it may be perceived as reducing their chances of achieving the highest level of performance, even though the jury is still out on the benefits of intensive early training for adult sports performance (Donnelly, 1997; Farstad, 2007).

Furthermore, in sports such as figure-skating and gymnastics, the introduction of the minimum age was not matched by changes in judging criteria and so simply forced adolescent girls into greater risk-taking behaviours as they attempted to maintain the positively graded pre-pubescent body type to an older age (Donnelly and Petherick, 2004).

On balance, there appears to be a consensus that safeguards need to be improved to protect elite child athletes from the clear risks of injury and other harmful practices. While there has been considerable work to protect young athletes from injury-risk, it is difficult to see how such work will be effective when the dominant sporting model views athletic success in terms of pushing the frontiers of human performance. For example, although the first Youth Olympics in Singapore in 2010 had as its core values 'excellence, friendship and respect', the Olympic motto continues to encourage the young athletes of today to be 'faster, higher and stronger' than those who have gone before. This is exacerbated by the commodification of athletes to make profit for the owners of their sports, with commercial interests often undermining the well-meaning policies of those attempting to intervene on behalf of the athlete (Young, 2004b). There needs to be a sharing of information and good practice from schemes such as EUROSAFE and STOP, a review of appropriate levels of training, competition and judging criteria, and greater research which enables the voice of the elite child athlete to be heard in informing future practice.

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Chapter 7: *From concept to model: A new theoretical framework to understand the process of emotional abuse in elite child sport*

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The elite child athlete experience

The move towards early identification of talented athletes is one which is well documented, with the majority of National Governing Bodies of sport having some form of talent identification programme in place which runs alongside a developmental competitive programme. As was pointed out by Farstad (2007), 'the situation characterised by early talent identification where children from an early age are faced with serious commitments, a high degree of training, pressure and expectations' is commonplace. Indeed there are numerous examples of children under the age of ten competing and engaged in intensive frequent training programmes (Donnelly, 1997; Hong, 2004; Ryan, 1995). Thus children are competing in significant competitions at very young ages and whilst it must be acknowledged that minimum ages exist in most sports, restricting the competitive age in senior events, there still are Junior World Championships, Junior European Championships and Junior Olympics in the majority of sports, and the children who compete in them will all be engaged in intensive training programmes as part of their preparation. Furthermore, in many sports and in many countries residential training centres are the means through which future athletic talent is developed. In such situations it may 'make the child particularly vulnerable to exploitation by competitive coaches' (Farstad, 2007). These practices are common place across the world with children in intensive training programmes training before school, after school and during their weekends (David, 2005). Little time is left over to see family or friends and the separation can itself be traumatic. Performance achievements mask the process through which they are realised, and there is an acceptance that the end justifies the means. Children who participate in elite sport are very rarely seen to be a vulnerable population, and are certainly not considered to be 'at risk' (Gervis and Dunn, 2004).

Becoming an elite athlete today is a serious business with sport investing more money than ever in its potential stars of the future, and children starting their sporting careers at increasingly younger ages. Training is often long, boring and repetitive. Elite child sport is physically and psychologically demanding, requiring child athletes to push themselves to extreme limits even at a very young age. Sport dominates their lives and often isolates them socially. If an elite child athlete trains six days a week for several hours a day there is very little time left for anything else except school, sleeping, and eating. Athletes also travel abroad to compete and can spend even more time with their coaches than with their parents. The coach is therefore in a position of considerable influence, which makes the elite child athlete very vulnerable if their power is misused. Burke (2001) reviewed the sociological literature of child athlete-coach relationships from a philosophical point of view and highlighted the power that the coach had over the child athlete. He stated:

Coaches often view their athletes as their possessions. They are wary of outside judgement and questioning of their tactics, philosophies and practices in coaching. They may enact any number of restrictions on their charges, restrictions that are only placed by parents. (p. 229)

Within this type of relationship the coach demands loyalty and obedience on the part of their athletes. The methods employed are unquestioned and often pervade all areas of the athlete's life, a privilege that is generally only given to parents' (Burke, 2001). Moreover, athletes that conform often produces a positive bias towards them from coaches, which acts further to reinforce the authoritarian coach-athlete model. Research by D'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier and Dubois, 1998 examined the coaching practices of three French Olympic judo coaches using a qualitative methodology interviewing both coaches and six of their highly elite female athletes. They identified six interaction strategies that were adopted by these coaches that delineate this authoritarian approach. These were; stimulating rivalry, verbal provocation, displaying indifference, entering into direct conflict, developing team cohesion, and exhibiting favouritism. Although presented by the authors as acceptable or even desirable coaching behaviour, some of the strategies (e.g. stimulating rivalry, verbal provocation by the coaches, displaying indifference, entering into direct conflict with their athletes, and exhibiting favouritism) carry a distinct echo of the concerns that other writers have had about such behaviour being potentially emotionally abusive (e.g. verbal abuse, ignoring, isolating; see Garbarino, Guttman and Seely, 1986; Navarre, 1987; O'Hagan, 1995).

Further research into the coach-athlete relationship by Coakley (1992) found that, whilst some coaches took on the responsibility of the role-model or advocate, others abused the power they had. Coakley adopted a qualitative interview methodology with 15 elite athletes from a variety of sports. It was found that athletes described their coaches as dictators, who employed rigid systems of control, and totally dominated the relationship. Interestingly, when participating in sport the athletes protected the coaches who behaved in this way as they felt it was normal behaviour and what they deserved. Only on reflection did the athletes find this behaviour abnormal. This notion supports Navarre (1987) who highlighted the problem of abusive behaviour as so endemic to a culture or a community that it was not acknowledged as such. If the above researchers are correct in their conclusions then if the prevailing culture within elite sport is a fundamentally emotionally abusive one, coaches and athletes alike will fail to recognise its destructive nature. This seems to be confirmed by the work of Kiani (2005), who reported one athlete saying; 'maybe it is a form of bullying way of doing things, but it works' (p. 35). This reinforced a 'win at all costs' approach where the means is always justified by the end results achieved. Research by Cushion and Jones (2006) provided evidence to support this in an elite academy football environment, in which five coaches and 24 players were studied through a 10 month season. They identified that the authoritarian nature of the football subculture had a pervasive influence on the coaching methods adopted and accepted by coaches. As they stated, 'harsh, authoritarian and often belligerent coaching behaviour was viewed as a necessary aspect of preparing young players' (p. 148). The underlying culture of the academy as described by Cushion and Jones was one where the coaches maintained the power, and the players were expected to comply. As they stated: 'The coaches were unquestioned and

unquestioning gatekeepers to the players' aspirations and success within the game' (p. 158). Methods reported to maintain their power and control included abusive language, threats and personal castigation, all of which could fit under the umbrella of emotional abuse, but may also have had the effect of athletes and coaches accepting abusive behaviour as the norm.

It is at this point that one has to examine closely relationships between elite child athletes and their coaches. On the surface they may appear to be working with the best interests of the child helping them to realise their dreams of becoming a professional athlete but, if we explore the child maltreatment literature, it becomes clear that there are disturbing parallels between the behaviour of the coaches and that of emotionally abusive parents.

Within the child maltreatment literature there is a growing body of work that explores the issue of emotional abuse within the context of parent-child relationships. Emotional abuse is not always observable and the damage may only manifest itself much later (maybe long after the athletes have retired from competing). Indeed it was the seminal work of Garbarino (1978) in which he termed emotional abuse as the 'elusive crime' which opened up an area that had previously been ignored. Garbarino highlighted and described adult behaviour towards children which he claimed was emotionally abusive. Such behaviour included; humiliating, belittling, shouting, threatening and rejecting. Thus he presented a framework from which the majority of work into emotional abuse has developed.

What later became clear was that apparently mild acts repeated over a long period of time can have a severe damaging outcome. Thus it is the 'drip, drip effect' of children constantly experiencing the behaviour or action that can result in psychological and emotional damage (O'Hagan, 1993). Emotional abuse constitutes the series of interactions or patterns of behaviour within a relationship rather than an isolated event as is the case with sexual or physical abuse. Furthermore, research has shown that the children who suffer the consequences of emotional abuse can exhibit a range of emotional problem symptoms which can include depression, diminished feelings of self worth, anxiety, emotional instability and eating disorders (Bingelli, 1987).

Creating the model

This chapter brings together theoretical perspectives which are anchored in child-parent relationships in order to discover if they are applicable to elite coach-athlete relationships. Work on emotional abuse has tended to focus on two distinct aspects; either identification of adult behaviour which can be considered emotionally abusive; or the emotional problems that arise as a consequence of children being emotionally abused by significant adults. It was the aim of this research to bring together these different theoretical approaches in order to examine the process of emotional abuse within sport from the child athlete's perspective. It is from this examination that a new understanding can be achieved which connects these two ends of the abuse spectrum, namely abusive adult behaviour and the resultant emotional consequences for the child. This work has adopted an integrated theoretical approach that makes connections between a number of theories where none previously existed.

Primarily there are four key bodies of work that provide the theoretical foundation for this research. These are: Garbarino *et al.*'s. (1986) proposed framework of emotionally abusive behaviours, O'Hagan's (1995) concept of the importance of behavioural frequency in emotional abuse, Bingelli, Brassard and Hart's (2001) identification of emotional problem symptoms occurring as a result of childhood emotional abuse, and lastly the concept of a misuse of 'power over' in the culture of coaching existing in elite sport as proposed by Burke (2001). All of these concepts were used as a means of developing an understanding of the perceptions, cognitions and feelings of the coaching process from the child athlete perspective. A new integrated model was created and tested in this current research utilising these theoretical frameworks. By using this multi-theoretical approach to investigate the issue it enabled the creation of a 'new' construct which to be drawn from the different elements of the theoretical perspectives in ways which have never been done before. It hypothesises that child athletes will have been emotional abused by their coaches if they:

1. Have experienced negative coaching behaviour in accordance with Garbarino *et al.*'s. (1986) behaviour categories
2. Have experienced this behaviour frequently (O'Hagan, 1993)
3. Report some 'emotional problem symptoms' (Bingelli *et al.*, 2001)
4. Report a misuse of 'power over' model in coaching (Burke, 2001)

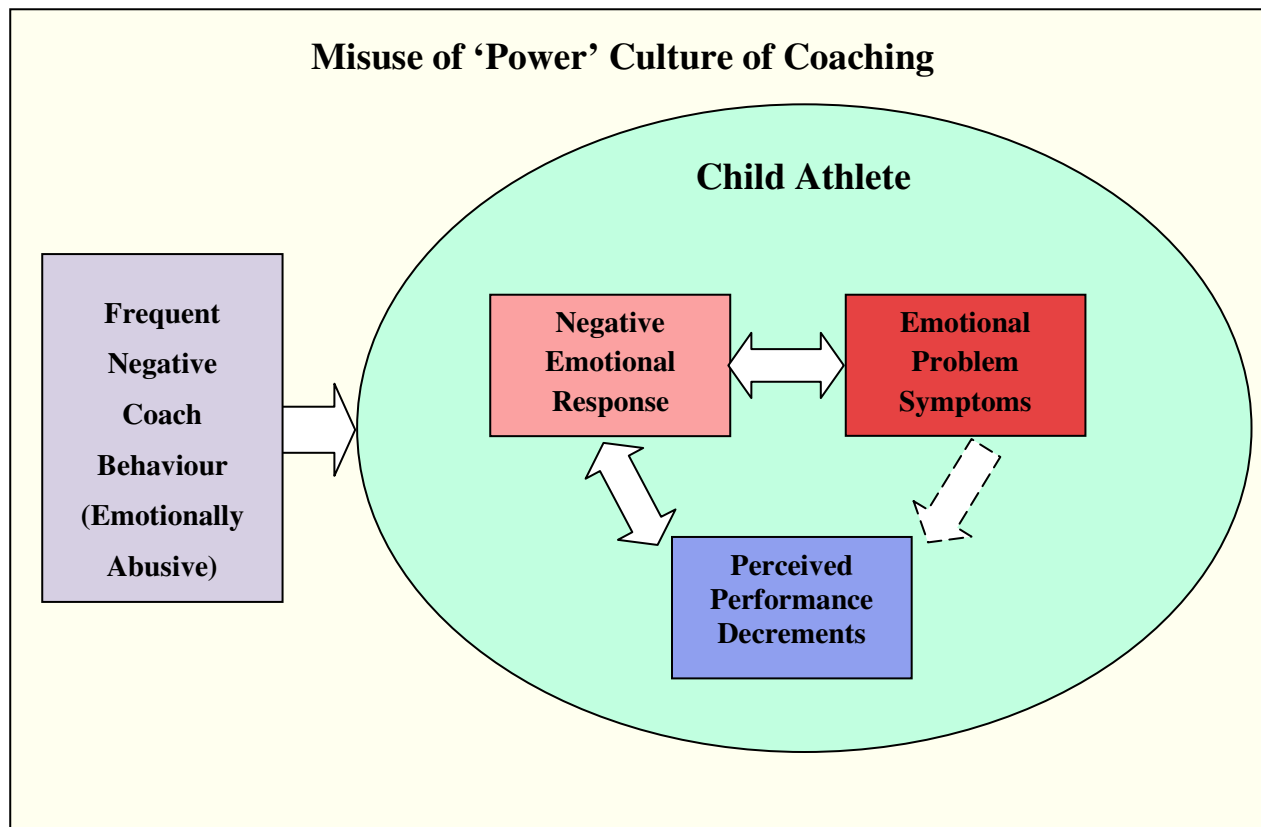


Figure 7.1 Theoretical Process Model of Emotional Abuse in Sport
Source: Gervis (2009)

The theoretical framework which underpinned the research was in essence exploring the relationship between coach and child athlete through the lens of emotional maltreatment. These concepts have been incorporated into the Theoretical Process Model of Emotional Abuse in Sport (Figure 7.1) which details the processes involved when a child is emotionally abused in a sport context.

It is important to outline the possible emotional reactions which might occur within the child athlete as these are often hidden from the outside world. The model indicates that the precursor to the development of any emotional problems would be a negative emotional response to coach behaviour, if an athlete constantly experiences a negative emotional reaction this would render them more vulnerable to developing emotional problems. The model also suggests that there is a link between both negative emotional responses and emotional problem symptoms to the athletes' perception of their own performance. Consequently, an athlete will report that frequent negative coach behaviour has a perceived detrimental effect on their sporting performance.

The main purpose of this study on which the model is based was to test the model and, explore the emotional responses of elite child athletes to their coach's negative coaching behaviour, using the theoretical frameworks established from the child maltreatment literature to guide and support the research. It should be pointed out that the term 'negative coaching behaviour' has been created for the study. The coaches themselves might not have thought of their behaviour that way, nor indeed might the child athletes at the time. It might be that their negative approach was an accepted part of the coaching environment. In the light of the data collected on how the athletes reported that their coaches behaviour made them feel, and what effect it had on their performance, its effect can be described as 'negative' – as 'negative' as the behaviours of other adults who have emotionally abused children in their charge. Such behaviour is described in child maltreatment literature.

Definition of terms

Elite child athlete: Any person under the age of eighteen who competes in any sport at international or national level competition.

Emotional Abuse: The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone' (Department of Health *et al.*, 1999, p. 5-6).

Emotional Response: The perceived emotional reaction either positive or negative, resulting from the interaction between coach and child athlete, from the athlete perspective.

Negative coaching behaviour: Any coach behaviour that fits Garbarino *et al*'s. framework of emotional abusive behaviours and is perceived by the athlete to have a negative emotional impact.

Outline of methods

The issue of retrospection

In choosing to investigate a potentially sensitive recall area the approach has to be ethically sound as well as using methodologically robust procedures. There is a debate within child maltreatment research that examines the question of retrospective versus prospective methodologies. This debate can be used as a tool here. One of the inherent problems with prospective methodology is that it is hard to identify and follow maltreated children because the very nature of maltreatment means that it is subject to high levels of secrecy. Furthermore:

Professionals who discover abuse must report it to law enforcement and/or child protection agencies, which are ethically bound to intervene in some way. Once the children are identified, action must be taken.

(Kendall-Tackett and Becker-Blease, 2004, p. 723)

This further confounds the research dilemma because the action or intervention might act in some way to alter their original perceptions of the participants' experiences. Further to this, one has to consider that the majority of survivors of abuse, and in particular sexual abuse, have not been identified as children. Rather these victims are identified as adults when they present with psychological disorders which can only be retrospectively attributed to their childhood abuse. Within the context of sport, coaching behaviour is not generally perceived to be 'abusive' and would not be considered as a catalyst for psychological disorders. Thus, the possibility of undertaking prospective methodologies is even more open to question within sport than elsewhere. In consideration of the use of prospective methodologies, these questions were raised and it became apparent that talking to elite child athletes about their experiences of their coach at a time when they were still working with them would raise a number of issues which might render the athletes emotionally vulnerable: consequently this was ruled out.

The research was therefore constructed using a retrospective approach. There was the danger, of course, that the athletes would not be able to remember, or that their memories were faint or distorted: the reliability and validity of data gathered from retrospective methods had, therefore, to be carefully considered.

The study focused on interviewing 12 ex-elite child athletes (male=4, female=8) about their retrospective experiences of being coached as elite child athletes. The interviews were framed

to test the theoretical model. These athletes had all been on World Class Performance programmes or equivalent and all participants were identified as elite when they were children (Age of identification: M=13.1yr.) Participants were asked to reflect on their past experiences as elite child athletes, and so their responses represented the residual impact of their experiences.

Evidence of a 'power over' culture of coaching			
I just accepted it, because he was my coach and you had to follow his rules (A3)			
He became a power maniac because I was good he thought it was all his doing(A9)			
Because you take the sport so seriously it is you life almost, and the coach can take it all away (A8)			
She does it to make me feel small and so that I know that she is in charge (A10)			
Evidence of:Frequency of Negative Coach Behaviour	Evidence of:Negative Emotional response	Evidence of:Emotional Problem symptoms	Evidence of:Perceived Performance Decrements
Frequently, definitely'(A1)	'Anxious because I was scared of going to training' (A7)	Depressed and really low (A7)	I was meant to be one of the best but I never felt like this (A3)
It was frequently within the session (A11, A12)	Upset and embarrassed in front of other people' (A4)	I felt worthless as a person (A2)	Embarrassed, like I was useless at the sport(A7)
It was quite frequent, it certainly wasn't rare (A6)	'It made me angry because I felt like he had done it on purpose' (A4)	All it did was destroy me as a person to make me feel worthless (A12)	'When she shouts it is very personal, I don't like it and I can' train properly, it puts me off my dives because she scares me ' (A10)
It happened all the time (A4)		I think being humiliated is so horrible and the pain of it I think I will always remember(A2)	

Table 7.1 Examples of interview data related to key components of the Theoretical Process Model of Emotional Abuse in Sport (Note: 'A' refers to athlete)

Key research findings and issues

The results from the study confirmed the theoretical model as having currency within sport. The findings from the qualitative study revealed that all the participants had experienced negative coaching behaviour on a frequent basis when they were training as elite child athletes. They also reported negative emotional responses to this and self reported emotional problems as a consequence of how they were coached when they were children. Furthermore, all of the athletes specifically reported that Belittling, Humiliating, Threatening and Shouting were the most frequently experienced. These negative behaviours were considered to be part of their coaches' day-to-day coaching methods. Table 7.1 gives a brief summary of some evidence from the interview data that supports the key components of the model.

Athletes reported the occurrence of this behaviour independent of the gender of their coach, or of the sport participated in or whether team or individual. The athletes reported a range of residual emotional problems many of which stayed with them long after they stopped competing.

The resulting emotional responses that the athletes reported included: feeling stupid; feeling worthless; feeling upset; lacking self-confidence; feeling angry; feeling depressed; feeling humiliated; feeling fearful and feeling hurt. The above are consistent with descriptions of children who have been emotionally abused. (Bingelli *et al.* 2001; Gracia, 1995; Kent and Waller, 1998; McGee *et al.*, 1997; Mullen *et al.*, 1996; O'Hagan 1995). What appeared to emerge was that all the athletes expressed a very fragile sense of self worth that extended beyond the sport environment. Responses from the athletes illustrated the nature of the power relationship that existed between the child athletes and their coach. In all instances the responses indicate that the power was firmly placed in the hands of the coach, and that the athletes did not have any power in the relationship.

Messages for policy makers, sport organisations, coaches, athletes and parents

The athletes studied here reported having to cope with the pressures of training and competing at the highest level in a climate of sustained attacks on their self-esteem when they were still vulnerable children. But the behaviour of their coaches went unchallenged, as they were all successful athletes. The outside world viewed them as victorious achievers and as such they went unnoticed as potentially being at risk. The results from this study may lead one to hypothesise that the experiences of these athletes are not likely to be isolated cases, but are indicative of accepted coaching practice. The essential message from this work is that the accepted climate of coaching elite children needs to be challenged and scrutinised to ensure that elite child athletes are not being emotionally damaged by their experiences.

Conclusions

Preliminary results indicated that the Theoretical Process Model of Emotional Abuse in Sport was supported through the findings of this study. Significantly as athletes reported an increase

in the frequency of negative coach behaviour, so their response was an increase in their negative feelings. This would support the notion that it is the 'drip, drip' effect of coach behaviour that caused the athletes to report a negative emotional response. Thus in the coaching context, if a coach adopts a methodology that includes frequent negative coaching behaviour- such as humiliating, belittling, threatening and shouting- there is a risk to the child athlete of developing an emotional problem as a result. Finally, whilst this model is anchored in sport it may well be beneficial to explain the process of emotional abuse in many other contexts, and thus be considered a universal model that could potentially have many applications.

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Chapter 8: *Elite child athletes' narratives of emotional abuse*

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Narrative 1: Kate

Kate was born and raised in Canada. She came from a nuclear family and had one older sister who danced recreationally. Kate had and continues to have a very good relationship with both her parents. Over the years she has also maintained a number of good friendships both in and outside of her sport. Following in her sisters footsteps Kate started dance at age 4, and at the recommendation of her dance instructor, began gymnastics at the age of 5. Kate also played several sports in elementary school including basketball, volleyball, and track and field, but eventually only had time for gymnastics.

I started gymnastics when I was 5 and I never really looked back. I remember I started Saturday morning classes just to try it and there weren't any auditions or anything because I was 5. It was just one of those recreational classes and I loved it. I just absolutely loved it! So every year I went more and more. Twice a week, and then three times. I was actually playing a bunch of different sports until I was almost twelve. So I had a bunch of things going on, but when I eventually had to pick just one I really, really loved it, so I just stuck with gymnastics.

Kate was a very successful gymnast. She began competitive gymnastics at 7 years of age. She was a national champion before the age of 12, and spent over 10 years competing internationally in her sport. At the time of the interview she had been retired from her sport for just over 1 year. Kate had a series of junior coaches as a young child. She had one junior coach in particular who she remembers as introducing her to competitive gymnastics, but only trained with her for a short period of time (1-2 years).

I wanted to compete really badly. I was always competitive and especially at that time nothing else was on my radar – I just wanted to compete. I think my coach met with my parents and said "She's ready to compete" and when they approached me I was like "Okay." So I ended up doing really well in my first year and that's when it all started and they [coach and parents] began planning for the future. She [coach] told my parents that she saw a lot of potential in me – a lot! And that in order to improve I would have to start coming more hours, so I was training 6 days a week since I was 7 or 8. So yah, she definitely helped me to look at my future and made me realize that I could actually be really good. I remember when she first said these things I was 8 years old and was like "whatever," but I guess that's how it all started.

Aside from this introductory level coach, Kate described having 2 main coaches throughout her competitive career. The first coach she trained with from ages 9 – 12.

So how it worked at our club is that there was one coach that worked with all the younger girls, or all the provincial level girls, and there was another coach that trained beside us in the bigger gym with all the older girls - the big shot national level girls. Every few months this coach would ask the junior coach to bring 2-3 girls over to see her. When I was selected to go perform for the head coach I had never been so nervous in my life. I was shaking. She was just such a terrifying woman! I remember the first time I met her I just stood there and she circled me. She pulled off my sweater and my sweatpants so I was standing there in my little bodysuit. She was just checking me out and moving my body and I remember being so scared. I had never been so nervous in my life. She eventually said "Okay we'll see what she can do." So I did my routine for her and she wanted me. She wanted to train me – and I had no say in this whatsoever. I didn't want to go at all, but I did. That's the way it works, higher level coaches have a certain power over the other coaches so whatever they say goes. So she basically just told my coach at the time that she wanted to train me, so she was taking me from her. I think at the time my coach told my parents that the head coach saw a lot of good things in me and thinks that she can really take me to the next level. And I think the way they spun it was a very nice sugar coated version of what that meant. My parents were so excited, so they were for it. I think they asked me what I wanted, but I never said I didn't want to go. I was very indifferent. I knew it was a very good opportunity so I think I just went along with it ... My training dramatically changed when I switched over. It was so much more intense, and I was the baby. I was 10 and I was training with girls that were 20 or 21 and were going to the Olympics. It was just very intense, very different and much harder.

When asked to describe her relationship with her coach, Kate explained that her coach could be extremely emotionally abusive at times. However, Kate also indicated that she had a very close relationship with this coach.

This coach was the worst. It got pretty bad. They [the coaches] just come from this world where anything and everything goes. She screamed at us, and it wasn't yelling, it was screaming. That was terrifying. Even just hearing her voice now would terrify me. And it was mean. You know you can yell and say things like "you're doing it all wrong" and stuff like that, but it was so much more than that. It was really hurtful. It seemed like she really tried to hurt you. And everything you did was wrong. Everything! You would do one move wrong and she would come stomping over and stand over you and then physically manoeuvre your body and scream in your face. Sometimes she would smash CDs or whip CD cases at you. If you were practising and god forbid you messed up and something was within her range she would kick it so hard – it was like she was a soccer player! It was almost like she had a force field around her. You didn't want to get too close to her at all. But on the other hand she was such a mother to all of us. Like we loved her - I loved her. She was like my second mom. I would actually tell my mom and my friends that I love her. Because the way they treat you when you do so well, it's like I'm perfect, I could do no wrong. They're so proud of you and everyone is so happy, but then the second that it's not going so well you feel so insignificant, and small, and like nothing. It was always those two extremes. I think at a young age you know it's wrong,

but at the same time you don't because you working towards competing and it feels so good when you do well, you just feel caught.

As soon as Kate entered this elite training group she witnessed older athletes' experiences of emotional abuse.

The first time I saw the coach act this way it wasn't towards me it was directed at one of the older girls. I think it was my first day with that group and the girl just couldn't get this one move. I remember standing on the edge of the carpet and watching. The coach wouldn't let anyone else go for like an hour – she just made the girl keep repeating her routine over and over. And she couldn't get it. The girl was crying and in pain cause she was injured, and they [coaches] don't care. They think you're faking. The coach was yelling in her face telling her that she was nothing, and that she doesn't deserve to be in the gym. The girl just broke down. She was literally lying on the floor crying and the coach marched over and yelled at her to get up. Then she turned around and screamed at all of us to start working. I remember being so scared and I was just hoping that she wouldn't see me, so I just kept moving.

When asked to reflect on the first time she remembers experiencing these behaviours herself, Kate recalled:

Actually I was lucky because when I was young I wasn't involved in it that much. She was actually really nice to me. She would make special routines and pick out new music for me. She would ask me to try new skills, and if I did something well she would say how amazing I was, and would call over the older girls and tell them how good I was ... She would give me hugs at the end of practice. You know, she always had this way of being really intense and scary with someone else and then I would catch her looking at me working and she would give me a smile. And I would like to believe that at that time it was a very genuine smile 'cause I will always remember that. She always had a lot of faith in me and she was the one that got me thinking about the Olympics. She motivated me. I don't think I ever really got over my initial fear of her, but I loved her! ... I think when she yelled at me for the first time it was 'cause I couldn't get a certain skill. I started crying and she was like, "Don't cry! No one cries here. Be strong!" It really got to me that I had to be a strong person. I think the first time I was really upset. I was almost waiting for it to happen. I knew it was going to happen 'cause it had been happening to all these girls around me, so I knew it would happen at some point.

Kate admitted that at this age she was still one of the youngest athletes in her group, and as such was not the major target of her coaches' abuse. Kate would be upset when she was yelled at, but *"just wanted to impress her [coach],"* so for her the most upsetting part was knowing that her coach was disappointed in her. Most of the time Kate was on her coach's good side, but once she got a bit older, the frequency of her experiences of emotional abuse from her coach intensified. At this point the regular experiences of emotional abuse became a *"normal"* part of her training.

I was so happy with how I was performing that I would never say anything to my parents about her. And I would never cry at home. I loved her. I really did. And I was doing so well and loved the sport so much that it almost became normal to me. The yelling and screaming it was normal. Like the whipping of a CD across the room, that wouldn't even phase me if I saw someone do that right now. When my parents asked me about how training was I would just say "good" because I was still at that age where I was just pushing myself and I was competing really well. If I wasn't competing well maybe it wouldn't have been worth it – and maybe that's what happened with a lot of my teammates. You know it's hard to talk bad about her because she is responsible for where I am now. She was a crazy, crazy person, but at the same time she was amazing. She's either a really bad coach or a really good coach. There's two sides to it. Regardless of how she was though, that's how I got to where I am, so I sometimes feel torn. I know what she did was wrong, and I know she was crazy, but I would never complain to my parents ever.

Kate was devastated when her coach was forced to leave the club because of issues of coaching misconduct. She wanted to follow her coach, but her parents adamantly opposed the move. Kate had her second coach for the majority of her gymnastic career. She trained with her from ages 12 – 21.

So when I was about 12 the new coach came in and she was really nice. She was completely opposite and we got along really well. With her those first couple of years were great. It was probably one of my favourite times in sport because it was very positive, but then she started to turn a little bit ... We were all doing really well and we got to this point where she had a national champion in each age category ... Everyone started asking for her advice and wanting her to be the national coach, and the judges and the whole gymnastics federation were putting pressure on her to compete with the team internationally ... I think she just took all this pressure and it totally got to her because she clearly changed. That was really difficult and those were probably the worst years for me. She started pushing a lot of training camps and a lot of travelling and was starting to yell a lot, and she never yelled before. When it happened with her I don't think I cried. I was more angry. Those years were just brutal ... I can take criticism and I can work with coaches and push myself really hard, but when the coach is yelling comments at you that don't make any sense and are hurtful and mean – I started to think I don't need to take this. I don't need to be here. So it was really, really difficult working with her. It was hard though because we were so far into our plan for ourselves. You set a goal – My main goal was the Olympics and once I was on my way to achieving that, mid way through you can't just decide I'm not going to do this anymore. There was so much that went into it. There's everything your family sacrificed and I had worked my ass off. It just wasn't worth it to me to walk away because of the split personality of one woman. So I just battled it through ... I think my parents knew I was upset at this time. I was a pretty private person with my training, but I would go home upset all the time.

Although upset by her coach's behaviours, Kate still did not tell anyone about her emotionally abusive experiences.

I knew that it wouldn't help. I think with my parents they would get really upset and they would want to go talk to her and that's the worst thing you could ever do. She [coach] would say I wasn't trying. Why was I even there – that I didn't work. That was the worst. She always used to tell me that. She'd say "You don't even work. You're disgusting." I'd be dripping with sweat and so tired and you have this person telling you that "You're useless" and "You're not even trying". It's the worst thing anyone could ever say to me. One day I went home and just cried to my mom. Full out - and I never do that, so she was like I'm going to talk to her. And I was like "No! Please don't talk to her," but she did and then my coach totally took it out on me for the next two weeks. When she screamed at me and I broke down she'd say "What? Are you going to go call your mom now? You can't handle it? You're such a child!" She also used to give me the silent treatment for days and not even care. That was actually the worst. I remember feeling like I was training for something so important and my coach was just sitting there. I could do horrible or I could do perfect and she'd say nothing. She pretended as if I wasn't even there, but gave criticism to everyone else ... So we would go up and down, up and down. I would go through periods of about 3 weeks of absolute horribleness. I might as well have not gone. I think it actually made me worse instead of better. That's how bad it was. You get to a point where you just don't even care. Like you do care, but I would be at practice and I would just totally give up or totally waste my hours ... I would just shut down completely and have no emotions whatsoever. She would be screaming and I would just be standing there. She would call my parents and say, "You have to make her work. She has responsibilities." At this time I was working towards the Olympics so everyone had all these high hope in me, and there was all this pressure on her and me. My mom wouldn't know what to do, she would just cry. And to make my mom cry it was horrible. So she [mom] would say if it was that bad you should just quit then, and that would enrage me because that's not what I wanted at all ... This went on for years. It takes a really strong person, or only really unique people can handle that. If I didn't love my sport enough I would not have done it. I know that!

Contrary to the normalisation of her emotionally abusive experiences when she was younger, Kate eventually got to a point where she knew that these coaching behaviours were wrong, but still continued to endure the emotional abuse from her coach.

I got to a point where I didn't think it was right, but I was just going to deal with it. Thinking back, I just think of the horrible emotions I was feeling and I think wow if that was how I was feeling then I don't know how I was doing what I was doing. There are points when you feel so low where I couldn't do anything but just sit – I was in Europe all the time training alone. It would be just me and my coach at the hotel and I would just sit in the bathroom for hours because I didn't want to be in the same room as her. I cried so much. And anyone that knows me knows I don't cry, and especially not in front of people, but it was almost like it was a relief. Everything was just bottled up and I felt like

I needed to scream, but I couldn't scream because I was in a hotel with my coach. So I would just sit there [in the bathroom] ... It's hard to be with a coach like that, but then again she's your coach. I could never switch coaches. I tried to think of even who I might switch to, but I couldn't ... There are so many coaching politics. If you leave a coach in a bad way no one else will want to coach you. It's pretty unheard of to switch coaches at that level. The thought definitely crossed my mind, but it wasn't an option. Every year before the start of the year my parents would be like, "Think about it. You know exactly what you're getting yourself into. Do you really want it? Do it for yourself. Who cares if you're letting your coach down because you have all this potential." But it was so much more than that - If you want to quit you feel like you're letting your country down because you have the potential to do well for them ... I would actually have moments where I would have to think about it, but I just couldn't stop. It is so hard at times, but I had this goal and I just needed to get it no matter what.

Kate eventually retired from gymnastics after she achieved all she could achieve in her sport. She no longer maintains a relationship of any kind with her coach.

Again, when I was doing really well, everything was perfect. I could do no wrong. Everything was happy, friendly, but to this day I will fully go on the record and say I have no relationship with my coach, and I'm totally fine with that ... I have a lot of friends that are athletes and they think it's odd that I don't have a relationship with my coach whatsoever ... I know that I worked with her for 10 years of my life, and we travelled all over the world and were so intimate, but if I never see her again I'll be totally fine. I don't talk to her at all. She'll email me every once in a while, but I don't respond. I don't think I'm messed up because of it now. I think I'm okay ... Honestly though, it sounds so horrible to say, but I really just don't care about her. On the one hand you're kind of like wow you helped me realize my dream and I will always thank you for that, this is what I wanted in my life and this is what I worked for, but you also used me to make a name for yourself.

When asked what she would do if she was given the chance to do it all over again, Kate responded:

It's funny because there's so much bad, but there is also so much good and the good totally outweighs the bad. Even when you're in that moment where you're thinking about how bad it is, it helped to think about how good it feels to be out there competing. Nothing beats that moment.

Narrative 2: Rob

Rob immigrated to Canada with his parents at the age of 11. He comes from a family of professional athletes. As a young child he was very athletic and did tae kwon do recreationally. When he arrived in Canada he spoke very little English and his parents still only speak their native tongue. Rob was told by his father that he had to do something with his time other than

play video games, and was instructed to join a sports team that would help teach him discipline. Rob called 4-1-1 [information] and looked up the contact information of local hockey teams. Rob was interested in hockey because he perceived it to be a popular 'Canadian' sport. Although he had no prior experience, he tried-out and was selected to compete on a local competitive hockey team.

For me it was mostly parental pressure saying go into sports – go do something. And me I was like I don't want to ask too many questions here. I'll figure it out on my own – go with the flow. So that brings me to my first coach. My first coach was an Italian gentlemen. I tried out for his AA team and he said, "Okay fine you have good size, good speed and a lot of potential, but no guarantee of ice time. Come on the team." So to me all I heard was "Come in," because I didn't know what ice time was.

Rob did very well. He was a high scorer by the end of his first year. Rob developed friendships, he was performing well, and his coach was excited about working with him the next year. He was looking forward to competing on this team the following year, but Rob's father decided that he should move up to a more competitive team.

So at 13 I tried out for the AAA team and I made it. So again the coaches took me. I scored my first game, but I struggled though. This was probably one of my most stressful years. It's a big jump to this level of hockey and this is the age, 13-14, where you have to solidify your name in hockey if you want to be drafted to the junior leagues. You know to me as a kid I was playing hockey because I liked hockey. I got good at it. And yes, NHL players, you watch them, but to be honest I never got exposed to them as much. The way I got exposed to it was by watching other people and the environment on the AAA team, it was constant competition.

Again Rob only lasted one year on this team. At the end of the year he was recruited by the coach of the junior Canadian team. Up to this time, all of Rob's previous coaches were volunteer and the commitment level to the sport was much lower. It was a competitive environment, but Rob was just learning the game at the time and was not around long enough to build a relationship with any of his previous coaches. At age 14, this was the first coach Rob started to build a relationship with. He trained with this coach from the ages of 14-16.

He saw me play and was like, "I'm gonna hook you up. I'm going to invest in you." He [coach] had a son on the team as well, and he said "I'm gonna make you guys attend the same classes together." Basically by the end of my first year of AAA I didn't have to pay for hockey anymore. I was doing good and offers were coming in. So at that point it was business. I was like if you want me, pay me. My coach would pay. My skates were bought. My year was paid for. So I began playing the next year and the coach there was okay ...

Rob explained that he was performing well so he would get a lot of positive attention (money, praise, ice time). He said his coach was not like this with everybody, which made him feel

unique. At some point Rob stopped receiving this positive attention and instead his coach would yell at him and call him derogatory names. He was benched from games and completely ignored by his coach. Following an on-ice incident and an argument with his coach, Rob explains:

I took off my gloves and I went to the locker room and just sat there. My coach eventually came in and I was just like, "You're going to sit [bench] me? What am I a piece of garbage? You're paying me – let me play!" To this day I still don't know why that happened ... At the end of the day you're the means to their end, and that's the way I was treated.

When this started to happen, Rob received an offer to play for an international team, which he quickly accepted. Rob trained and competed with this coach from the ages of 16-17.

*So the way training was, was basically the coach told you how to train. When you're younger the coaching is much more liberal. Like if you want to train, train. If you don't want to train, then don't do it 'cause there's hundreds and thousands of other players ... So maybe for that reason they didn't have to push you as much ... So at this level they [coaches] would isolate us for three months before the tournament into this ... resort for training, and it's away from the city...At that time I was roughly 16, turning 17. And 'cause you're just there with the coaches they can do whatever they want. The normal routine would be to wake up a 5 in the morning and go for a glass of juice. Then you would go for a 10 k run and that would be your warm up ... Then you take the bus to the rink where it's 2 hours training ... after the 2 hours you get dressed and then go for another run. You run a little bit and then climb on the bus. You eat, you sleep and get ready for the next practice. Mind you, I was also in school so some afternoons I had to do take-home exams and find some time to literally copy and paste answers from a text book onto a take-home exam. Cumulatively you spend about 4 hours a day on the ice and anywhere from 3-5 hours doing dryland. The coaches basically said, "Do this, or get the f*** out of here" or "Do this, or I'm going to s*** on you."*

*In hockey there is this saying, "Cowards shouldn't play hockey." And to be honest cowards shouldn't play hockey for their own emotional survival. So when I got there [to the new team] it started happening again [emotional abuse] ... I saw other teammates being yelled at vulgarly by the coach. I don't want to say all coaches are like that, maybe they're not, but this one was really messed up in the head. He went ballistic on players. He would be like, "You mother f***ers, you f***ing waste of life – do this drill!" Or if you messed up he would say, "Are you a f***ing hockey player or a f***ing little p***y. You're a piece of s***! Fuck you!" I was just like, "I don't give a s*** about hockey – I'll just leave right now."... The worst thing that I witnessed him do was when we were watching the game the next day on video – like with the whole team. So he [coach] turned to the goalie and was like, "The f*** are you doing here [referring to a play on the video]? You piece of s***!" He picks up this brass keychain – like this thing was like a brick – and "Whom!" across the conference room. It was a major scene – It was like*

"Boom!" I was just shocked. I was like did that just happen? I looked around and everyone was like "Shhh."

Rob explained that he did not leave the team because he had had the same problems with his previous coach and this was now his only chance to move up the ranks. Rob also explained that he looked up to this coach as a father-figure, and not only did he experience emotionally abusive behaviours from this coach, but in some incidences he also experienced positive attention and praise.

*We would be sitting in the dressing room before going out and the coach would say, "You guys are all dushbags - all pieces of s***. What are you going to do today when you get into the rink? I would say, "Uh play hockey," and he said, "Wrong. You guys are not hockey players. You're going to try to prevent the other team from playing hockey. He pointed to the better players on the team and he said, "They are going to play hockey and you are responsible for helping them play hockey." And for me I know my worth as well – it's a team game, but basically yah it was demeaning, right? ... But then at the same time it becomes kind of like a cult, because this person [coach] is both the source of demeaning as well as praise. So when I would beat the crap out of somebody, or do something nice [perform well], he would reward you in front of people - so it's a weird relationship. But to me like I just wanted to do it so that I wasn't a quitter – I just wanted to persevere.*

Rob continued to talk about his relationship with his coach and almost justified his extreme behaviours with the pressure both of them felt to perform in sport.

*One day the sport administrators came in the dressing room and said that it is very imperative that you score in the top ranks ... These guys were saying if you don't do it then basically don't come back. That was the mentality. So the coach was snapping because he was a messed up individual, but also because he has the pressure coming from the top as well. Don't mess up! ... It's weird when you win and your singing the national anthem and the flag goes up, like of course you're going to feel that you represented your country and this coach made it possible. I didn't have this hatred towards him ... The tree is judged by its fruit, and I made it to pro so how can you say it didn't work? Of course it worked. But the thing is with him [coach], I would never say that he intended to be a pejorative person. With all this stuff, he was just genuine, and he was being a coach to me ... This guy, to be absolutely fair, had some nice positive things about him. Like he would be joking around sometimes. Just ultimately he didn't give a s*** about you, you know? Maybe he did in a really weird way - It was just kind of wrong.*

... So I got hurt – I couldn't play anymore, and they [coaches] were just like "Okay now you're hurt. That's it." And that's the last time I ever spoke to him [coach]. That's it. Never a card. Never an email. Literally, I went back home and he never talked to me

again. I'm just like do you at least wonder what happened? I mean I'm a big part of the team, I knew it, and all of a sudden just discarded.

After surgery and a couple months rehabilitation Rob was drafted again, and was eventually bought back by his initial coach. He ended up performing very well with his previous coach, but continued to struggle with multiple injuries.

I wasn't as in to it – I guess I was just jaded by all the struggles ... To me I try not to get upset. I see reality for what is. It [coach not staying in contact after injury] made me realize I am just a means to an end. So then I assessed my body and was like, "What kind of means am I to their end?" I don't have any means anymore ... I was being benched and everything that had happened to me before just came back to me ... so I moved on – I went to university, and I'm thankful that I had that opportunity.

When asked if he ever told anyone about either of his coach's behaviours, Rob said "No" and it appeared as though the thought hadn't entered his mind until this point.

No ... No I didn't? I don't know why ... Yah – I'm pretty sure it would come as a shock to them [parents] – this whole discussion if I was to ever say it ... I think my dad roughly has an idea. I don't know – you get pretty jaded - you get desensitized. You're just like okay this happens. My dad went through a lot of stuff, so for them they'd probably just be like yah it happens – that's just the way it is. They would be surprised that it happened, like the details, but they wouldn't be able to do anything about it ... That's just the way it is. It's almost like a Marxist trying to change capitalism - A revolution maybe, but if you want to handle it diplomatically – it's not the right way.

When asked what he would do if he was given the chance to do it all over again, Rob stated:

I don't know. I can't say yes. It made me a very aggressive person ... Uh ... I feel like it was a really abusive time in my life. To be honest, I would not put my kids through this. If I had kids – no way, no way. It's not worth it – sit on the couch and play some video games. Seriously.

Chapter 9: *Bullying, homophobia and transphobia in sport: At what cost discrimination?*

Ian Rivers, Brunel University, UK

As a young gay man, homosexuality and sports seemed like opposites to me. And so for many years I eschewed athletics. My sense of being a gay man had more to do with witty conversations at elegant dinner parties than it did with grunting and sweating in a gym. I had avoided athletics because I didn't want to be part of that straight, masculine world that seemed to me both threatening and inappropriate. (Pronger, 1990, p. 3)

Introduction

In his seminal text *The Arena of Masculinity*, Brian Pronger described athletics as “both threatening and inappropriate”. As a young gay man, he looked at the world of sport (professional, educational and recreational) and decided it was not for him. Sports or, in this case, athletics were simply not options for the young Brian: it was not part of the gay landscape and thus remained the domicile of the heterosexual and of heterosexism. But at what cost was this young man excluded? Did his being gay mean that the United States was robbed of a world class athlete or perhaps an Olympian? Even if this was not the case, at what cost do we exclude young people who are not heterosexual? At what cost do we exclude those whose exceptionality is played out in arenas other than solely on the track or field, or in the gymnasium or hall? Why must elite athletes only be exceptional in their chosen sport? Why is it that in other aspects of their lives they must look and act like anyone else – ordinary, unexceptional, uninteresting? Does the private life or, more particularly, the sexual life or orientation of an athlete have any relevance to her or his ability to run faster, win more medals, or cut seconds from a previously unbroken record? Clearly it does. Many athletes have chosen to ‘come out’ as gay after they have retired rather than endure the slurs, innuendi and homophobia of coaches, sporting governing bodies and, most particularly of all, fans.

The cost of driving down participation in sports by excluding sexual minorities is, as yet, unknown. Even within recreational sports, the emergence of amateur and Sunday league football teams for lesbian, gay and bisexual players is a testament to the failure of those responsible for governing sports to tackle the issues of homophobia clearly and decisively. As Brian Pronger articulates so coherently in his book, sports remain bastions of heterosexism; not because they believe sexual minorities do not exist but rather because they hold to rigid definitions of *male* and *female* which, in turn, also result in the exclusion of transsexual and transgender individuals who, for want of a changing room and some appreciation of their life choices and the challenges they face, cannot even participate because they may not be ‘man’ enough or ‘woman’ enough. Take the case of Caster Semenya who, at the age of 17, was thrust into the spotlight, not because of her resounding victory in the 800 metres at the 2008 World Championships, but because she was asked to undertake a gender test to ‘prove’ she was a

woman. Not only was this whole episode poorly handled by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), but as the IAAF president, Lamine Diack commented, “*there was a leak of confidentiality at some point and this led to some insensitive reactions*” (*The Times*, 24th August, 2009). But what prompted such ‘leaks’ to occur? Was it jealousy on the part of other coaches or athletes? Was it perhaps a fear that she had taken drugs? The IAAF argued that they wished to ensure that she had not achieved an unfair advantage other over athletes due to a rare medical condition? But this argument does not hold up under scrutiny. For example, should this argument be taken to mean that anyone who is faster, fitter, or perhaps more agile as a result of genetics or divine intervention be banned from sport? As Caster herself said, “*God made me the way I am*”. What criteria do we use for exclusion? Should every sprinter be 5 feet 10 inches tall to ensure that no others have an unfair advantage because they have longer legs? At 6 feet 5 inches would we deny Usain Bolt his record of achievement because some of his predecessors and competitors were or are shorter? Of course to suggest that such questions are easy to answer would be naive, but that does not mean that we should not scrutinise the actions of the governing bodies of sport and place their own inclusion policies under the spotlight.

Coggan, Hammond and Holm (2008) have argued that issues such as fairness in sports are not as clear cut as perhaps we would like them to be. If there are agreed rules and procedures, limitations and conditions to not only participate in sport but compete professionally, then it is acceptable that exclusion criteria exist or that where an athlete sits outside the agreed inclusion criteria that they have, by implication, an unfair advantage. However, while this volume is primarily concerned with the elite child athlete, there is always a starting point in a sporting career which revolves around a child or young person’s willingness to participate. It is this willingness to participate I wish to explore in this chapter, considering why certain young people feel, as Pronger did, that sports were welcoming.

In order to understand why sexual minorities and transgender people face exclusion in sport, it is important to acknowledge that unlike many other arenas of life, most sports are necessarily segregated. Men and women cannot compete against one other, only against members of their own sex. This single factor lies at the heart of the case of Caster Semenya. At the same time, issues of proximity (particularly in changing rooms) have also resulted in a denial or fear of same-sex attraction which begins at school and continues to be played out in the changing rooms of professional football teams as the late Justin Fashanu found out (he remains the only professional football player in the U.K. to come out as gay).

Exclusion from sport at school

Various authors have commented on the difficulties young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face at school (Rivers, in press). In a study conducted in 2004 with 1,860 young people attending secondary schools in the North of England, Brackenridge, Rivers, Gough and Llewellyn (2007) reported that of those who witnessed incidents of homophobic bullying at school (n=266; 14.7%), one third of such incidents occurred on the playing fields with slightly more pupils reporting having witnessed it happening in the changing rooms before or after

physical education classes. Additionally, they found that boys were more likely to be the perpetrators of homophobic bullying on the playing fields and in the changing rooms than girls. They were also most likely to be the victims. Although this study focused on only the geography of bullying, it was evident that both sports fields and changing rooms had a significant role to play in homophobia. As Mac an Ghaill (2004) argued, schools are locales in which heteronormativity is played out both in terms of subject choices and opportunities afforded pupils, but also in terms of the aspirations they are allowed to articulate. It is perhaps ironic that nearly two decades later, while we are beginning to see a change in the way young male participants in team sports are defining their own heterosexuality, acknowledging the need for intimacy, trust and affection (Anderson, 2009), this has not been extended to include gay team members because the façade of heterosexuality must remain. Thus, we are left with two dilemmas: (i) how do we encourage young lesbian, gay and bisexual athletes to participate in sports, and (ii) how do we include young people who perhaps are working through their own gender identity issues?

Do sports take place in safe environments for young people?

As noted above, Brackenridge *et al.* (2007) found that both the playing fields and the changing rooms of schools were places where homophobic bullying took place; but what about for other children and young people? Are schools, and particularly physical education classes, safe for young people? In a more recent study conducted with 2,002 young people in the North of England, I asked 188 young people (M age=13.60 years, SD =0.95 years; 105 boys, 83 girls) who were perpetrators of bullying why they singled out particular individuals for harassment. In particular I wanted to explore whether or not there were associations between scores for hostility (using the Brief Symptom Inventory hostility subscale; Derogatis, 1993) and victim characteristics.

Significant relationships were found between hostility scores and perpetrators' reports of bullying others because they were not good at sports, $r_b = .23$, $n = 185$, $p = .002$; because they were not so good at school work, $r_b = .22$, $n = 185$, $p = .002$; because of their possessions, $r_b = .19$, $n = 185$, $p = .008$; because they had been bullied or someone they knew had been bullied by their victim(s), $r_b = .19$, $n = 185$, $p = .008$; because they had special educational needs, $r_b = .16$, $n = 185$, $p = .03$, or because they were perceived to be gay or lesbian, $r_b = .16$, $n = 185$, $p = .03$. All other correlations were not significant at $p = .05$.

The fact that not being good at sports was the strongest correlation with hostility is an index of the importance that young people place on athletic performance. Interestingly, this study also found that the most frequent bullying perpetrators engaged in related to their victim's sexual orientation. So how should we interpret these findings? Clearly, for the young people who participated in this study, sport - or rather a failure to achieve in sport - is a catalyst for disquiet among peers. Such disquiet results in a lack of investment among those who perhaps do not perform so well or achieve the minimum standards required for inclusion in the peer group. At the same time, such exclusion could promote a lack of engagement with any sporting activities and a disinterest in sports generally. In these circumstances we have been guilty, within our

educational systems, of driving down participation by accentuating the need for sporting achievement rather than by promoting inclusion. In the end, young people who may be keen to develop their skills, and over time excel, find themselves relegated to the benches by their more athletic peers or, worse, singled out for ridicule because they do not represent the ideals that others have accepted as the 'norm'.

Implications

So here we find ourselves in 2010 at the height of an obesity epidemic, with fewer young people than ever before participating in recreational sports, with the 2012 Olympics looming, and fears for the future funding of sports in the face of a global financial crisis. Whilst I fully understand the need to support elite athletes, I remain concerned that sports remain alien for a number of young people because they do not measure up to the imposed norms or ideals that have formed the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria.

I am left with a sense of fear that sports continue to miss opportunities to engage all young people by not embracing diversity fully. As Brackenridge, Alldred, Jarvis, Maddocks and Rivers (2008) have shown there remains very little research available on the inclusion of minorities in sports and, whilst there may be a host of statements and policies supported by the sport governing bodies, there remain so few 'out' athletes that, for many young lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women, professional sport is not an option. For transgender young people we face an even greater challenge, for they cannot participate in sports pre-operatively. They cannot use the changing rooms of their desired sex; they cannot compete against those of their desired gender. Their access to gymnasiums and sports clubs is restricted because these commercial settings cater for the majority not the minority. Then there are those young people who are not given the opportunity to develop sport skills because they have not shown enough talent or ability early on. How do we re-invigorate their desire to participate in sport? How do we redress the unfairness of an educational system that has, for so long, disparaged those young people who may want to participate but may not succeed? These are some of the challenges that face educators, parents, coaches and sport organisations in engaging today's young people.

Conclusions

In this brief chapter I have attempted to highlight some of the issues that have raised questions or concerns for me as my career has moved from one focused on psychology and education to one that includes sport sciences and human development. This chapter in no way represents a fully formed argument but perhaps an emerging one about grass roots participation in sport that may have implications for elite athletes who, as I noted earlier, have to start somewhere. If we can address the challenges we face in enthusing young people to participate in sport, then perhaps we will also, necessarily, have to address a number of other issues around participation and inclusion. The case of Caster Semenya highlights the fact that sport governing bodies have yet to fully think through how they deal with those who are different, and it would be true to say that apart from a few organisations in the U.K. (e.g. the Football Association), the impetus

to support openly gay athletes has been somewhat lacking. As one young gay athlete, Brendan Burke, who died in a car crash in 2010 at the age of 21, wrote:

I think it's important my story is told to people, because there are a lot of gay athletes out there and gay people working in pro sports that deserve to know there are safe environments where people are supportive regardless of your sexual orientation.

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Chapter 10: *The sexual subjection of boys in sport: towards a theoretical account*

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Introduction

Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a persistent and widespread social practice (Gilbert *et al.*, 2009) predominantly perpetrated by men. In considering the sexual abuse of *male* children, one is faced with a number of explanatory accounts that say little about the experiences of boys. These can broadly be divided into those that focus on the individual and those that focus on society. Thus, over the last three decades feminist perspectives have challenged individualist accounts (see Ward *et al.*, 2006) that construct the perpetrators of CSA as somehow weak or ill and fundamentally distinct from the wider male population (Cowburn and Dominelli, 2001) whilst ignoring the gendered aspects of sexual exploitation and abuse (e.g. Kelly, 1988; Rush, 1980). According to Seymour (1998, p. 422) 'it is evident that the nature of gender socialization in our patriarchal society predisposes males toward child sexual abuse.'

However, both positions are problematic (Brackenridge, 2001) and according to Liddle (1993) there is a missing 'theoretical linkage' between the micro (psychology) and the macro (sociology) that frustrates a satisfactory account of this social problem. Cossins (2000) has argued for a sociological theory of CSA but still presents abuse as a pathological response to childhood trauma, albeit prompted by the demands of masculinity. This chapter offers a possible resolution to this theoretical challenge.

Explaining child sexual abuse

The problem of explaining individual action (agency) within an account sensitive to social structure, culture and history is not a problem particular to theorising CSA. Arguably, the late sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) constructed a conceptual framework for social practice that is able to overcome the structure-agency dichotomy (McNay, 1999, 2000). Potentially, it offers the 'theoretical linkage' required for a socio-culturally sensitive account that avoids the charge of either biological or social determinism (Hartill, 2010).

Central to Bourdieu's social theory is the notion that when social agents act they always do so within a context, so that they both determine and are determined by that context, or social *field*. In this fashion, for example, 'the banker or the priest are financial capitalism or the Church made flesh' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 57). Unusually for a major social theorist, Bourdieu wrote specifically about sport (see Bourdieu, 1990a, 1993) designating it a '*relatively* autonomous' cultural field that sits alongside and overlaps with other fields, such as science, the media or religion. In this way, it is possible to consider athletes, coaches, officials, *etc.* as sport embodied – the *field made flesh*. Thus, Bourdieu theorises social action from a position whereby historical

social structures ‘inhabit’ the individual, they are embodied, and it is on this basis that individual action is generated, but not determined. Crucially, for Bourdieu ‘there exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 12) so that ‘property appropriates its owner, embodying itself ... generating practices perfectly conforming with its logic and its demands’ (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 57).

There is insufficient space here to comprehensively set out this perspective, however, in this chapter I will consider this notion of embodiment in relation to the ‘elite’ male child and the sexual subjection of boys within sport. I will draw upon interviews with ‘survivors’ of CSA in sport to illustrate my perspective. These men were between ten and twelve years old when the abuse began; it continued for a period of not less than one year.

The *illusio* and sport

For Bourdieu, the struggles that take place within social fields are analogous to game-playing, and sport is frequently drawn upon as a metaphor for ‘social games.’ The notion of *illusio* is central to Bourdieu’s theoretical formulation:

Illusio is the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is ‘worth the candle,’ or, more simply, that playing is worth the effort ... If your mind is structured according to the structures of the world in which you play, everything will seem obvious and the question of knowing if the game is ‘worth the candle’ will not even be asked ... the *illusio* is the enchanted relation to a game that is the product of a relation of ontological complicity between mental structures and the objective structures of social space. That is what I meant in speaking of *interest*: games which matter to you are important and interesting because they have been imposed and introduced in your mind, in your body, in a form called the feel for the game. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 77)

The field of sport is very clearly imposed upon boys; indeed, it is introduced as being fundamentally related to their male, masculine identity – their *boyhood* – itself (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1990). Thus, Coakley (2006, p. 157) states ‘youth sports [is] a context that has been organized and controlled by men in ways that reaffirm traditional gender ideology.’ Therefore, boys in western societies are raised in an environment which encourages them to feel, from a very early age, that *the game* was definitely ‘worth the candle’:

Will: *Coaching - sport - was very serious, very serious ... you wanted to be the best, because what you wanted was praise from this man. We were all slaves to praise, you know. We were willing to do all sorts of things because we wanted praise from this man because it meant so much.*

Early in their boyhood, these ‘survivors’ all had a trenchant belief in ‘sport’:

Illusio is thus ... the fact of being invested, of investing in the stakes existing in a certain game, through the effect of competition, and which only exist for people who, being

caught up in that game and possessing the dispositions to recognize the stakes at play, are ready to die for the stakes ... (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 77).

Sheldon Kennedy was an outstanding young athlete who was sexually abused by his highly respected coach whilst on 'camp' (see Kennedy, 2006). However, when offered the 'opportunity' of joining him again, to develop his ice-hockey career, despite his trauma about what had already happened, he simply didn't have the vocabulary to say 'no': "*I was supposed to be the next David Beckham right, and so how does a guy quit, how do I just up and quit sport?*" (Sheldon).

Boys abused in sport have been drilled, not only in the technical aspects of their sport, but also to recognise the stakes of the game in which they are invested. To speak out, or act, against the game would be to 'crack the game asunder,' to disregard the stakes of the game. Such is the manner in which the game has been introduced to him, the sports-boy cannot feasibly entertain such an act. Thus, the elite child athlete, is subjected to sex, not by a 'sick' individual but by a 'man who held the keys to the world that I had wanted to be part of since I was a little kid.' (Sheldon).

'Why didn't I say something?' is perhaps a perpetual question of the adult survivor; they knew they could have, yet when they say, 'I just couldn't,' this is in fact exactly the point – 'saying something' was theoretically possible, yet *literally* impossible. For this reason, boys sexually abused in sport are only able to speak of their experiences, if at all, many years after the abuse – that is, once they are able to recognise that the game is (and was) *not* 'worth the candle.' (Indeed, 27 years is the average duration between abuse and disclosure for males (Spiegel, 2003)). Therefore, once they are no longer overwhelmingly characterised by an enchanted relation to the game (the sport *illusio*), critical reflection becomes more possible. Yet no doubt for many, this *never* occurs.

Action, resistance and symbolic violence

According to Bourdieu (1998) 'knowledge' presents a potential source for social agents to resist the force of 'social games' but he argues that this is far from a simple process: 'one does not free oneself through a simple conversion of consciousness' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 79). Where children are concerned this is surely an even more complex process and where the child is constructed or labelled as (and aspires to be) an 'elite athlete' it is clear that their (new) identity demands that they be 'an athlete' and little else. That is, it is not simply the case that the child desires to *be* an athlete, rather, they have been explicitly depicted, often from a very young age, *as* 'an athlete' and this imposed identity (and status symbol) requires considerable maintenance. This is made abundantly clear from recent 'evidence,' influential within UK sport at least, that claims 10,000 hours of practice are required to reach professional/elite status (Balyi and Hamilton, 2004). Thus, according to Malcolm Gladwell 'the tennis prodigy who starts playing at six is playing in Wimbledon at 16 or 17' (*Daily Mail*, 2008).

This is the *symbolic violence* of which Bourdieu speaks; the symbolic violence that, of course, permits very real violence and abuse (not least sexual) on generation after generation of children. According to Bourdieu (1998, p. 103):

Symbolic violence is the violence which extorts submission, which is not perceived as such ... achieved when the mental structures of the one to whom the injunction is addressed are in accordance with the structures inscribed in the injunction addressed to him. In this case, one says that it went without saying, that there was nothing else to do.

In such a fashion we may be better able to understand the position of children faced with a sexual encounter with an adult in sport. The young, elite, male athlete, successful and ambitious, is perhaps a perfect exemplar of accord between subjective and objective structures. Indeed, it might be argued that the purpose of governing bodies is singular: to turn the child into an athlete/player; and that this single, coherent, totalising objective has the effect of rendering the child in a dominated state by providing him with the cognitive capacity to do little else *other* than apply the categories of the dominant.

Boyhood-sport extorts the submission, complicity and silence of young males to their own exploitation:

MH: Were you told not to say anything?

Will: *No, never! Never, never. That was never, ever suggested. He knew perfectly well I wasn't going to say anything.*

Of course, sexually victimized boys *could* say something. That is, if we considered that social agents (including children) operate from the basis of unshackled, autonomous rationality. This is not the argument here. According to Bourdieu (2001, p. 39):

It is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone ... because the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions. This is seen, in particular, in the case of relations of kinship and all relations built on that model, in which these durable inclinations of the socialized body are expressed and experienced in the logic of feeling (filial love, fraternal love, etc.) or duty, which are often merged in the experience of respect and devotion ...

Brackenridge (2001) then likens sport-abuse to 'virtual incest' due to the familial role that sport often plays in the lives of 'promising' athletes. Therefore, 'symbolic violence acts ... to maintain a relation of domination ... [and] it works when subjective structures ... and objective structures are in accord with each other' (Krais, 1993, p. 172). Do sexually victimized child-athletes freely choose *not* to speak out? No, yet neither were they, nor should they be, (theoretically) reduced to inertia, somehow non-cognisant of the events engulfing them. Undoubtedly, they acted in myriad ways: to 'manage' their abuse and their abuser – to calm them, to appease them, to resist and challenge them, to please them, to reduce the impact on others (especially parents),

to maintain the *status quo* through silence. Indeed, the scale of the challenges they faced forced them to bring all their powers of ingenuity, creativity and thought to bear on their action. They did *act*, they were *agents* (as opposed to objects) in this encounter; they could have acted differently. Yet theoretical accounts frequently deprive them of this capacity in the misguided assumption that this would be tantamount to giving credibility to erroneous claims that children somehow freely consented to the encounter.

Initiation and training: 'A Faustian pact'

The complicity of abused boys is coerced – but not simply through the persuasive efforts of an individual adult-male, but through their initiation and training in the field of athleticism - it was virtually preordained:

Simon: ... *there was kind of a - what could be better than being a rugby hero? It's literally a Faustian Pact. But you have to sign you know, it's not a choice, you have to sign ...*

Ordination is both an entry requirement, and a condition, of the boy's sustained engagement in the symbolic economy (the brotherhood) of organised male-sport. All the participants, whilst articulating a notion that they were *likely* candidates for abuse because of parental relations or family background, refer to the fact (or strong likelihood) that their abusers subjected many other boys to the same experience. That is, they were, in fact, *not* distinct, except that they occupied a deeply enchanted relation to the field. According to Bourdieu (1998, p. 111):

Soft relations of exploitation only work if they are soft. They are relations of symbolic violence which can only be established with the complicity of those who suffer from it, like intradomestic relations. The dominated collaborate in their own exploitation through affection or admiration.

The notion of collaboration may be difficult here, nevertheless, I feel that 'survivors' of CSA may well recognise the appropriateness of this formulation for their childhood situation. However, it is through these necessarily 'soft relations of exploitation' – perhaps epitomised in the 'it's all for the kids' narrative (Messner, 2009) - that belies a highly organised economy driven to 'develop' (exploit) 'talent' (the child's body), underpinned by a seemingly insatiable desire for elite success, regardless of costs to health or well-being. Thus, boys are persistently urged not only to enter sport, to *play* sport, but to become *sports-like* – to become sportsmen, athletes; to embody sport, to believe in it, to *be it*.

Through the sexual abuse of a child we can see very clearly the embodied nature of this complicity. Indeed, in organised sport it is perhaps more evident than any other field how children are trained to succumb physically to adult (male) authority – the sportsboy is trained rigorously and relentlessly, 'day-in day-out,' to submit his body utterly to the will of adult men. Bourdieu (1990b, p. 73) argues 'the body believes in what it plays at ... what is 'learned by body'

is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is.' This is no doubt especially true for the elite child.

Boyhood in sport is about learning to push one's body beyond its normal limits, learning to cope with physical discomfort and pain, learning to see one's body as a tool to be exploited for ends that may principally serve others, to sacrifice oneself without complaint at the behest of adult men and to learn the strategies of domination. This is the 'game' introduced to the boy and this is what his body believes in.

Furthermore, in the hyper-masculine, ultra-instrumentalist world of elite youth sport, where children's bodies are valued hierarchically according to their execution of arbitrary physical skills, *all* things sexual are utterly denied whilst simultaneously constituting a 'rite oriented towards virilisation' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 25). Thus, male-sport is an often erotic, sexualised, homophobic environment that denies itself as such, and thus denies *de facto* the sexual objectification/fetishisation of children's bodies – *it couldn't happen here* (Brackenridge, 2001).

Conclusion

Organised sport is engaged in a determined endeavour to structure children's minds in accord with an instrumentalist logic fundamentally geared towards conquest and domination. As Pronger (1999) puts it, 'the logic of adding to oneself by subtracting from others.' It does this whilst persistently engaging in acts of euphemism, constructing itself through a sustained discourse of healthy and wholesome activity, simultaneously denying any relation to sex. Such an endeavour presents a considerable risk for the elite male-child athlete who is trained from a very young age to believe, 'body and soul', in the game and the agents who epitomise it.

Therefore, the contemporary call to 'listen to children' and 'give children a voice' in sport (e.g. 'Child Power – Your Voice' *Amateur Swimming Association*, 2009) must be weighed against the field-forces and strategies that seek to homogenise the sportsboy/girl and limit his/her capacity for critical thought. In the objectification, commodification and exploitation of children's bodies, and the demand that they embody the field of sport, children are taught to intuitively understand that their bodies are objects to be used according to the demands of the agents of the field (men).

Therefore, in light of CSA in sport, it is incumbent upon adults to ask what capacity for autonomous and critical thought can the highly (relentlessly) trained child reasonably be expected to have developed towards the field they are instructed to resemble? If there is no space between subjective (cognitive) structures and objective structures – if the child is in fact 'the field made flesh' – there can be little hope that such children will feel able to speak up about the trauma they are faced with.

For the boy (if not also his mature self) to speak out about the violation, an act that would risk revealing the true nature of the logic of the universe that has structured his cognitive structures, would be tantamount to further violating himself, this time by his own hand. In

revealing the 'truth' about himself, the revelation would place him at odds with the (masculinist) symbolic economy that is so fundamental to his being. Such an act, for the young male, characterised by the sport *illusio*, enchanted by the game, is virtually unthinkable. Thus, the command of silence that masks and enables abuse is a fundamental feature of the 'game' of elite sport and the current enchantment with these masculinist rites and practices, generally, does not serve our children well.

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Chapter 11: *Athlete perceptions and experiences of sexual abuse in intimate coach-athlete relationships*

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Overview

This chapter reports the first phase of a two-phase research project investigating the prevalence of potentially threatening and abusive behaviours in a sample of male and female Danish athletes. A cross sectional, retrospective design, using a mailed survey, provided a quantitative assessment of sexual abuse prevalence in a national sample of athletes from recreational, regional competitive level, national and international elite level. Results from the total sample (N=1660) revealed that 5% (N=83) of athletes reported being manipulated or coerced into sexual contact at some time in their lives, and in five cases the offender was reported to be a coach. Significant gender differences were found as 6.3% of female athletes reported lifetime sexual abuse as opposed to 3% among male athletes. Almost one in three athletes reported to have experienced an intimate relationship with a coach. These relationships occurred during the athlete's childhood (0.5%), adolescence (8%) or adulthood (28%). Data showed no statistically significant differences between reporting personal experiences of intimate relationships at various sports levels (from recreational thru to elite sport) or between gender. Respondents reporting to have had experienced an intimate relationship with a coach as an adult had a more positive response regarding the relationship than athletes experiencing the same at 13-17 years of age. Elite athletes had a more critical response to coach-athlete relationships than at other sport levels. Implications of these results are discussed.

Introduction

Over the past decade, the value of young people's sport and play, and the need for safeguarding children in sports has become increasingly important. NGO's like the International Olympic Committee (Brackenridge *et al.*, 2007) and most recently the UNICEF (Brackenridge, Fasting, Kirby and Leahy, 2010) have started dealing with the issue of sexual harassment and abuse in sport. The need for implementing and evaluating safeguarding procedures and policies remains a challenging task at all levels of organised sport, from the international sports organisations and thru to national, regional and local sports. According to the official statements from the two main sports organisations in Denmark, the prevention of sexual abuse in sport is a top priority, but it has to stand in proportion to the size of the problem. (In Denmark there are three major sports organizations, but only DIF (The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark) and DGI (the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association) organize sport for children and adolescents.) Currently, very little is known about the size of the problem or how widespread it is, and subsequently no national or sport specific

child protection strategies have been launched to protect athletes' rights or promote athlete welfare.

Research into coaches' sexual abuse of athletes is still a relatively new field and so far prevalence studies have been few and often based on small samples or suffering from low response rate. Additionally, different methods and definitions make international comparison difficult.

A Danish pilot study among 250 physical education students and 275 youth elite coaches two and three percent respectively, replied that they had experienced an intimate relationship while the athlete was less than 18 years of age. Both men and women were included in these surveys and response rates were 55 and 75 percent (Nielsen, 2001).

Only two studies with national samples have been conducted for the purpose of assessing sexual abuse in sport. In Canada, 28.1% of a sample of 266 former female Olympians reported that they had had sexual intercourse with an authority figure in sport. 8.6% replied that they experienced forced sexual intercourse, and that 23 respondents were under 16 at the time of the sexual assault (Kirby and Greaves, 1996). An Australian prevalence study including men and women from elite and club sport level, found that 13% of women and 6% of men reported sexual abuse in sport (Leahy, Pretty and Tenenbaum, 2002). Both the Canadian and the Australian study suffered from low response rates (22% and 18% respectively), raising questions about bias in the data.

The current large scale national study aims to fill the knowledge gap about the prevalence of sexual abuse and intimate coach-athlete relationships in Denmark.

Definition of terms

In this article two terms are of key importance: intimate coach-athlete relationships and sexual abuse. The intimate coach-athlete relationship is to be understood by the respondent as a close emotional/physical relationship with a coach, in which the two parties typically refer to each other as boyfriend or girlfriend.

According to Leahy *et al.* (2002) sexual abuse can be defined as "any sexual activity where consent is not or cannot be given. Sexual abuse may include non-contact, contact, and penetrative sexual acts". Although this legal definition used in Australia generally fits the legal definition in Denmark, non-contact sexual abuse was excluded from the definition of sexual abuse in this study. The reason for excluding non-contact sexual acts from the definition is based on the content of §223 that specifically deals with sexual abuse of children and adolescents within the teacher-pupil relationship. According to §223 sexual contact is defined as intercourse or substitutes for intercourse such as masturbation or touching of breasts or genitals, whether it is based on manipulation or coercion. (It should be noted that criminal offenses violating §232 will not appear in the criminal record checks.) Non-contact types of sexual abuse such as exhibitionism, exposure to sexual acts, engaging in child pornography,

exposing a child to pornographic material, involving a child in sexually explicit conversation, physical touching and kissing are separately listed in §232 and legally considered to be less serious than contact based abuse.

Although sexual abuse has objective (legal) criteria, relationship dynamics will always be subject to personal interpretations. Based on previous research among Danish athletes it is a relevant hypothesis that a substantial number of respondents would explain their coach-athlete relationship experiences as an intimate relation rather than as sexual abuse. According to Willis (1993), child sexual abuse is neither accidental nor spontaneous, but often happens after deliberate planning, grooming and execution. Previous research has shown that athletes have a considerable tolerance towards physical handling and emotional intimacy performed by coaches and that they are reluctant to complain about sexual abuse or other types of mishandling. The increased tolerance in relations of trust is explicitly mentioned in §223 of The Danish Law, where it reads that “...there is a particular risk of abusing the position as a teacher to gain sexual access to the pupil.” (This law not only applies to the teacher-pupil relationship, but to all kinds of child-adult relationships, where the adult serves a function as caretaker, teacher or coach.

As a consequence of this law and the increased need for protection of children and young people, the normal age of legal consent is increased from 15 to 18 years. This means that a young athlete aged 15 to 17 cannot give legal consent to sexual intimacy with an adult caretaker.

Due to the nature of the helping relationship it will appear to be highly controversial to label any child-adult relationships as a boyfriend/girlfriend relation. The importance of these definitions is related to the actual text used in the questionnaire investigating the coach-athlete relationship.

Outline of methods and ethics issues

This study is a two phase project investigating athletes’ psychological well-being consisting of first phase survey and a second phase follow up interview study. The study was based on a national sample of 4,000 male and female athletes from 50 sports disciplines with 2,000 athletes from recreational/regional level sport and 2,000 from national/international elite level sport. Only adult athletes (between 18-50 years) were selected for the sample. The sample furthermore comprised of a sub-division between team-sports, individual sports, contact sports, aesthetic sports, and sports with extreme uneven gender distribution.

Given the comprehensive nature and content of the 16 page questionnaire it is very likely that the questionnaire could appear stressful for younger athletes, particularly if these were undergoing intense training regimes, busy travelling for international competition stress or undergoing abuse. As the top 100 athletes in Danish elite sport are tested quite intensely and travelling a lot, it was decided to exclude this group from the sample.

It is very likely that studies investigating sexual abuse will suffer from under reporting, because experience shows that many victims find it difficult to seek help, yet alone talk with friends and family about it. Other athletes would be reluctant to tell because of the risk of losing privileges or access to sport. Although the promise of anonymity could create a sphere of trust and safe confession, it could also seem unsafe to trust an unknown researcher with sensitive information. In order to impose trustworthiness six precautions were taken:

- a) Respondents were given thorough background information about the purpose and content of the study
- b) Respondents were guaranteed full anonymity and promised that all information would be treated with confidentiality and encouraged to participate in the study at which ever degree they wanted.
- c) Respondents were presented with a comprehensive and focused study on critical behaviours in sport signalling an in-depth interest and seriousness.
- d) Respondents were asked to not give personal or geographical details that could reveal the identity of possible perpetrators or other victims.
- e) Respondents could indicate if they wanted to be contacted for a possible follow-up interview
- f) The survey was designed to minimize emotional confrontation and subsequently sensitive questions were presented in a precise and careful manner.

Prior to contacting the athletes a full research protocol was made, including a section on ethical considerations according to the guidelines for social science in Denmark. Then the project was accepted by the two main sports organisations and Team Denmark. (Team Denmark, established in 1985, is the agency for the funding and development of elite sport athletes in Denmark.) Mail addresses for the elite athlete sample was obtained from Team Denmark and the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association. The club sample was recruited with help from club contacts identified by relevant sports association personnel from the main sports organisations. Each club contact was informed about the recruiting procedure in writing, and asked to recruit 10 athletes (5 men and 5 women) whom they thought would be willing to participate.

The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions covering sports participation, general sports career evaluation, critical experiences in sport, general welfare scales, experiences of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and socio-demographic background information.

Key research findings and issues

The mailed survey was conducted from late December 2009 to March 2010. The first round response rate of 52% must be regarded as very satisfactory considering the comprehensive and sensitive nature of the study. (801 respondents from the sample were untraceable because of multiple shifts in addresses. The total sample was thereby reduced to 3199.) Other researchers have noted that response rates for sexual abuse studies is typically lower than other sociological studies (Ketring and Feinauer, 1999) and that a 25% response rate for sexual abuse surveys would be acceptable (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986). The response rate for women (75%) was significantly higher than that for men (30%). The difference might be explained by a

higher sensitivity by women towards issues of well-being and sexual abuse in particular. Reversely, men with a high level of well-being may have thought that they have nothing critical to disclose, and therefore found it irrelevant to participate in the survey. For ethical and practical reasons no reminding letters were sent out.

Respondents were asked if they had personally experienced an intimate coach-athlete relationship and asked to state what their response was to the experience (Table 11.1). A total of 31% (n=519) stated that they had personally experienced an intimate coach-athlete relationship at some time during their sport career. It should be noted that only three respondents reported having had intimate relationship experiences with a coach in all three categories, and a somewhat bigger overlap was found between the two oldest age categories.

Table 11.1 Athletes' personal experience and response to an intimate relationship with a coach

Have you personally experienced an intimate coach-athlete relationship? (%)		Response to relationship (%)		
		Predominantly positive	Context dependent	Predominantly negative
Under 13 years (n=9)	0.5	56	33	11
13-17 years (n=129)	8	26	53	21
More than 18 years (n=459)	28	55	37	8

28% of respondents reported having personally experienced an intimate relationship with a coach, when they were 18 years or older: more than half of them reported the relationship as predominantly positive. Almost two in five reported their experience of the relationship as context dependent. (The context dependency could mean anything really, as respondents were not asked to specify their response in details.) However, multiple experiences with different coaches, or different experiences with the same coach, could have separate meanings.

Eight percent of respondents (n=135) reported having personally experienced an intimate relationship with a coach while they were under 18 years of age, potentially constituting a violation of §223. One in four had a predominantly positive response to such experience. One in five respondents viewed the intimate relationship as predominantly negative, and little over half stated that the response was context dependent. Twenty five percent of male athletes reported to have personally experienced an intimate relationship with a coach during adulthood in contrast to 22.5% for women. For adolescents the figures were 8% and 7.9% respectively. None of these differences between men and women were statistically significant. The analyses of differences between sport level showed a resembling pattern and no significant differences were found. A further analysis of the responses showed that elite athletes were less likely to rate the relationship as positive (6%) compared to athletes from recreational level

sport (23%). Athletes who had not experienced an intimate coach-athlete relationship were able to express their attitudes to such relationships. Almost 9 out of 10 replied that such relations were predominantly thought to be negative. This finding indicates that athletes become groomed into increased tolerance towards coach-athlete intimacy.

A total of 83 athletes reported that they at some time during their life had experienced being manipulated, tricked or coerced to participate in any kind of sexual activity (intercourse, substitutes for intercourse, masturbation or touching of breasts/genitals). In five cases female athletes replied that the perpetrator was a sports coach. Interestingly three of the five athletes made explicit and similar comments in the margin to the previous question about having personally experienced an intimate coach-athlete relationship. Here they wrote that what their coach was doing was not to be considered as a relationship, moreover it was sexual abuse.

93% of respondents reported that they had experienced sexual abuse before turning 18. Although 48% reported that they had told someone about the abuse at some stage, only 7% had reported it to the police. Significant gender differences were found both with respect to the reporting sexual abuse in the survey, telling someone and filing a police complaint. 6.3% of female athletes reported lifetime sexual abuse as opposed to 3% among male athletes and women were three times as likely to tell someone about the abuse and report it to the police. These findings resemble past studies showing that women are more likely to be exposed to sexual abuse and additionally more likely to tell when abused. Interestingly these findings also indicate that abuse is under reported to the police. Based on the numerous qualitative descriptions of the abuse scenarios, where respondents told about the consequences during childhood and early adolescence, it could be reasonably hypothesized that a substantial number of respondents would not have been able to tell about the abuse in a survey while it occurred. Feelings of exploitation or abuse may evolve long after the actual abuse – and regardless of the actual acts - it appears that the majority of respondents offering text descriptions of their abuse accounts have benefitted from being older and having a balanced distance to the abuse experiences.

The initial hypothesis that athletes have an increased tolerance towards intimacy in sport appears to have been confirmed as 8% report to have experienced an intimate coach-athlete relationship which potentially constitutes a criminal act.

Messages for policy makers, sport organisations, coaches, athletes, parents

Prevalence figures from this study show that intimate coach-athlete relationships appear to be widespread throughout Danish sports. The relatively high proportion of athletes reporting to have had an intimate relationship with a coach as adult athletes, show that many athletes have a wide tolerance towards coach-athlete intimacy, and that many coaches have loose professional standards towards engaging in personal relationships with athletes. Coaches should be informed that there is no such thing as a romantic coach-athlete relationship, and that coaches' physical or emotional advances are always wrong. Lack of professional coaching standards makes coaching in Denmark a field based on common sense and findings from this

retrospective study can be used by sports organisations to reinforce the need for understanding the responsibilities associated with being the trusted part in a helping relationship.

In 2005 new legislation in Denmark made it mandatory for all organisations and institutions, including sport clubs, to carry out criminal record checks when employing new staff to work with children under the ages of 15. With a reference to §223, it may seem controversial that the Danish law in general seeks to protect adolescents from the risk of being abused in relations of trust right till the age of 18, whilst sports clubs are only asked to perform criminal record checks for new coaches and sport leaders given authority over athletes under 15 years of age. Findings from this study reinforce the need for policy makers and sports organisations to improve the protection for the 15-17 year old athletes. Thus criminal record checks cannot prevent sexual abuse from happening; more emphasis needs to be placed on the development of broader child protection strategies.

Conclusions

The data from this prevalence study has shed light on the experiences of lifetime sexual abuse and intimate coach-athlete relationships, but further analyses of the consequences of abuse needs to be performed. Based on the data on diverse forms of physical and emotional abuse that children, adolescents and adults may experience in sport, crucial information about athlete welfare threats such as bullying, peer pressure, overtraining, eating disorders are yet to be uncovered within this study.

We need information about the most efficient ways of preventing emotional, sexual and physical violence from happening in sport. Prevalence studies can contribute with important data on athlete welfare threats, and subsequently be utilised by sports organisations to develop effective safeguarding strategies. If prevalence studies are conducted on a regular basis, then data can be used to monitor the effects of interventions designed to improve athlete welfare. A closer collaboration between international researchers on athlete welfare issues may contribute with stronger methodological designs and a stronger knowledge base.

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Chapter 12: *Towards an understanding of the maintenance of unhealthy coach-athlete relationships*

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Overview

The quality of the coach-athlete relationship has been associated with a number of both positive (e.g. performance and satisfaction) and negative (e.g. sexual, physical or emotional abuse) outcomes. The challenge to researchers is that healthy and unhealthy relationships can often possess similar properties, such as trust, liking and respect. Research is required to help conceptualize how unhealthy coach-athlete relationships are developed and maintained.

For many years, social psychologists have sought to explain why good people turn evil (Zimbardo, 2007) and have demonstrated the significant influence of situational factors in the promotion of unhealthy behaviour. This body of research is considered to highlight the need to explore how such influences may help to promote the maintenance of unhealthy coach-elite child athlete relationships. The implications of this approach for practice are discussed in this chapter.

The coach-athlete relationship

The coach-athlete relationship has been defined as “...the situation in which coaches’ and athletes’ emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are mutually and causally inter-connected” (Jowett and Ntoumanis, 2004, p. 245). This definition highlights the bi-directional nature of such relationships in that the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of the coach are both affected by, and also affect, those of the athlete and vice versa. This definition also supports the belief that relationship quality is multi-dimensional and hence one needs to consider the affective (emotions), cognitive (thoughts), and behavioral interpersonal aspects of relationships.

This relationship has been linked with a number of intrapersonal outcomes. For example, qualitative evidence has suggested that the quality of the relationship can have a significant effect on performance accomplishments (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003). Relationship quality has also been found to be positively correlated with psychological outcomes such as athletes’ perceptions of their physical self-concept (Jowett, 2008), their level of passion for sport (LafFraniere, Jowett, Vallerand, Donahue and Lorimer, 2008), and their level of satisfaction (Jowett and Ntoumanis, 2004).

Links between relationship quality and interpersonal outcomes have also been identified. For instance, Jowett and Chaundy (2004) found that athletes’ perceptions of the quality of their coach-athlete relationship were able to predict a significant amount of variance in their perceptions of team cohesion over and above that accounted for by perceptions of their

coach's leadership. Furthermore, Lorimer and Jowett (2009) have found that relationship quality is associated with a coach and an athlete's level of empathy. This relates to the extent to which the coach and the athlete have a shared understanding within their dyadic relationship and are able to accurately describe how their coach or athlete is feeling, thinking or behaving at a given time. This research provides some evidence of the importance of the quality of the coach-athlete relationship.

Relational power

Despite this growing body of research, there remain a number of related issues which merit consideration. For example, there is a lack of research regarding the coach-elite child athlete relationship, particularly in relation to the nature, role and consequences of relational power. Power has been acknowledged by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and communication scholars as a critical dimension of interpersonal relationships (Dunbar and Burgoon, 2005). Indeed, Russell (1938, p. 10) argued that "The fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same way that energy is the fundamental concept in physics".

Interpersonal power has been studied in a variety of ways. For example, it has been conceptualized in relation to an inequality in terms of emotional investment, available resources or alternative partners, or in relation to the ways in which decisions are made (Dunbar and Burgoon, 2005). Within relational psychology, power has been viewed as the ability to influence the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of another person (Huston, 1983). As such, the power within a relationship can be viewed on a continuum ranging from symmetrical (i.e. where both partners have an equal level of power) through to asymmetrical (i.e., where one partner has a very high level of power relative to their partner).

In relation to the coach-athlete relationship, it is not difficult to envisage a situation in which the athlete has invested a significant amount into the relationship, has few alternatives (e.g., the coach is world renowned), has unequal access to resources and has little influence over the decision-making process. In such situations, there is likely to be relational asymmetric power with the coach having a significant influence over the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of the athlete. Research has indicated that coaches have the potential to have a wide ranging influence on an athlete's professional and personal lives. For example, Tomlinson and Yorganci (1997) highlight how coaches can influence an athlete's training regime, diet, interpersonal relationships, weight and sleep patterns. It is therefore important to understand the factors which may contribute to a coach's level of power and how this may be manifested in ways in which the welfare of elite child athletes is jeopardized.

Sources of relational power

French and Raven (1959) identified 5 different forms of power; Legitimate (e.g. being in a position of authority in which one person may feel obliged to follow another's orders), Expert (e.g. relevant to a person's perceived level of knowledge or experience in a given field), Coercive (e.g. forcing another person to feel, think or behave in a given way), Reward (e.g.

being able to provide rewards to another person) and Referent power (e.g. being in a position to praise another person). It could be argued that coaches are in a position which may facilitate them having all of these different forms of power.

In relation to sport, Stirling and Kerr (2009) conducted interviews with athletes who had been sexually, physically or emotionally abused by their coaches. The central role played by relational power was highlighted. Power was found to be associated with four key factors. The first of these was the close relationship which had been formed with the coach. In fact many participants highlighted that the coach had become a father figure. Secondly, the coach was in a position of legitimate authority. This was due to the position that they held within the sport. Thirdly, the coach's power was attributed to the athlete's success. Clearly, if a coach has contributed to the athlete meeting their performance goals then this may strengthen their position of power. Finally, the coaches had reportedly controlled communication between the athlete and significant others (e.g. parents). Coaches have a number of different sources of power and it is important that these are all managed effectively to ensure that the welfare of elite child athletes is both protected and promoted.

Obedience

Powerful people may not be aware of their power because it is not only based in the relationship but also influenced by situational factors and cultural norms. Over the past 50 years social psychologists have conducted a series of studies which have highlighted the potential role of situational factors in influencing people's behaviour.

In the aftermath of the second World War, Stanley Milgram at Yale University conducted a series of experiments (Blass, 2000). The research investigated whether "ordinary American citizens" could perform "evil" acts just because they were told to by an authority figure. In the experiments there were 3 key roles; the experimenter, the teacher and the learner. Only the teacher was actually a participant. The experimenter and the learner were played by members of the research team.

The participants were told that the research was a study of memory and learning in different conditions. The participant (teacher) was required to read lists of words to the learner (confederate) who was required to remember these words. The teacher was instructed to give electric shocks to the learner. These were given at increasing intensities. The experiment finished when the teacher no longer wanted to continue or when they had administered 450 volt shocks 3 times in succession. The experimenter wore a grey lab coat and gave verbal encouragement to the participant to continue.

Expert psychiatrists estimated that around 1% of the participants would deliver the 450 volt shock. In practice, the figure was 65%. This seminal research demonstrated the power of authority and how situations can contribute to 'ordinary people' performing evil acts. The relevance of such work to coach-elite child athlete relationships may, at first, appear

questionable. However, when one considers the broader themes and findings which came from this body of work, the similarities soon become more striking.

Factors influencing obedience

A number of factors have been found to promote obedience. Each of these can be related to the competitive youth sport environment and may provide the foundation for future attempts to promote the welfare of elite child athletes:

Proximity of the authority figure: When the authority figure is stood next to the participant, the influence of his/her power was at the highest levels. Within sport, the coach is often central to the athlete's training and competing. As such they are likely to be in regular contact with the athlete. Based on this, sport may benefit through democratizing the decision making process such that power is attributed to a coaching team rather than an individual.

De-individualisation and de-humanisation: Through masking the identity of the perpetrator and/or the victim within these studies, the influence of the situation appears to increase. Through providing uniforms and ID numbers to anonymise participants, such as in Zimbardo's (2007) study, people appear to be more likely to lose their inhibitions and perform abusive acts on others. Within sport, athletes are often required to wear the same uniform and may sometimes be reduced to an entry number or set of rankings or personal best times. Thus, there is a need in sport to emphasize that athletes are individuals with their own personal characteristics, feelings and thoughts.

Significant others: The presence of other people can clearly influence obedience. Research suggests that the presence of other people also performing the 'evil' act increases the probability that the participant will also be obedient. Within the youth sport environment, significant others such as parents, peers and spectators can all encourage the obedience of a child athlete. For instance, if a child gymnast is training with a painful injury and is encouraged to train by the coach, then the child may be more likely to follow the orders of the coach if the parents are watching on and encouraging the behaviour. It is thus important to consider these significant others when designing interventions or education programmes to promote elite child athlete welfare.

Location: Both the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments took part in the labs of leading American Universities (i.e. Yale and Stanford respectively). This may also have encouraged the obedient behaviour of the participants. The fact that the actions were part of a research study in a legitimate environment may have encouraged participants to overcome any inhibitions they may have had about the requests of the experimenters. Elite child athletes may well train and compete in some of the most advanced academies and gymnasia in the world using the very latest equipment. Therefore, the location may legitimate any actions enabling a child athlete to justify their behaviour as it is taking place in such a culture of excellence and success. As a result, it is important to focus efforts to enhance welfare within all clubs and at all levels.

The assumption that because a particular academy or club is producing successful child athletes, it must be safe needs to be challenged.

Conclusion

Due to the strength of these situational factors, an individual approach focusing on identifying 'bad apples' may not provide a holistic and effective solution. Due to the culture of sport, an authority system may be created which facilitates power, obedience and potentially relational abuse. Milgram (1974, pp. 142-3) defined an authority system as "a minimum of 2 persons sharing the expectation that one of them has the right to prescribe behaviour for the other". Within authority systems, people (coaches) can be given legitimate power. Milgram (1974) suggested that a legitimate authority is one who is "... perceived to be in a position of social control within a given situation" and that his/her power "... stems not from personal characteristics but from his perceived position in a social structure" (pp. 138-9). These concepts appear to relate well to the coach-elite child athlete relationship and the competitive sport environment more broadly. As such, there may well be merit in advocating a situational approach focusing on highlighting 'bad barrels'.

The following Zimbardo (2007) homily captures the essence of the difference between individual and situational orientations:

While a few bad apples might spoil the barrel (filled with good fruit/ people), a vinegar barrel will always transform sweet cucumbers into sour pickles - regardless of the best intentions, resilience, and genetic nature of those cucumbers.

So does it make more sense to spend resources to identify, isolate and destroy bad apples or to understand how vinegar works, and teach cucumbers how to avoid undesirable vinegar barrels?

Having said this, it is important to note that relational power does not inevitably lead to relational abuse. Whilst power may be latent, relational abuse represents a manifestation of this power. Huston (1983) argued that power is an ability. As such, it may not always be utilised, when utilised it may not be successful and when successful it may not be evident unless met with a counter force.

We know from the work of Brackenridge (2001) that there are a number of risk factors concerning sexual abuse in sport. These relate to coaches (e.g. male, older), the athlete (e.g. female, younger) and the organization (e.g. lack of commitment to codes of conduct). There may be a need to develop this work to highlight relational risk factors which identify the turning points in the development and maintenance of unhealthy coach-elite child athlete relationships.

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PART 4: POLICY ISSUES

Chapter 13: *Understanding athlete well-being: reflections and recommendations based on a review of UK-based national governing bodies of sport's websites for information relating to athlete welfare and athlete well-being*

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Overview

Sport has enormous potential to be a positive experience for children and young people and it is often attributed with a range of short and long term benefits for participants. However, as Fraser-Thomas and Coté (2007) recognise, the benefits associated with sport are not automatic and to ensure desirable outcomes requires a critical awareness regarding the possibilities of sport for this age group. Only with such awareness is one then able to purposefully plan and promote enjoyable, engaging and developmentally appropriate sport experiences. High performance (HP) sport presents particular challenges for the well-being of children and young people, and although a range of services have been developed to support HP athletes within the UK, these are often designed around the needs of conversant adults. The comparative absence of child athlete related literature in sport science and sport medicine is further testament to this lacuna.

This chapter posits that an issue affecting both adult and child support provision in HP sport is one which exists at a conceptual level and pervades much of the sporting landscape. The issue of note is the relative lack of clarity about what athlete well-being is *per se*. It is of concern because knowledge of athlete well-being is deemed to underpin the capacity of stakeholders in sport to facilitate the thriving and flourishing of athletes. A review of national governing body websites is presented to reveal normative approaches to athlete welfare and well-being.

Athlete well-being

Consideration of athlete well-being is timely: it is inexorably linked to recent debate in broader social and economic spheres beyond sport about the conceptualisation of well-being to underpin public policy and service provision. In a pragmatic review of the academic literature to inform public policy, Hird (2003) recognised that there is considerable disparity about how well-being is conceptualised. Consensus is more easily achieved at a broad level when well-being is described as 'a positive and sustainable state that allows individuals, groups or nations to thrive and flourish' (Huppert, Baylis and Keverne, 2004, p. 1331). At an individual level, well-being is variously presented as involving; psychological, physical, economic, social and spiritual dimensions. There is now increasing consensus that well-being is distinct from merely the absence of illness or ill-being (Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2008) and as a separate state it warrants clear articulation. An issue with not achieving operational clarity about well-being in sport or other domains, is that whilst people intuitively know what well-being is, 'it means something

different to each and every individual' (Hird, 2003, p. 2) and very possibly to different organisations too. Welfare as *faring well* is similarly universally known, yet unique through individual interpretation and often used interchangeably with well-being. As Fleming (1952, p. 379) notes, welfare is an ethical concept which '*relates to situations*', and according to Allardt (1975, cited in Greve, 2008), is about fulfilling essential needs. In this sense welfare practices may be oriented to assist people by facilitating domains of well-being and / or by preventing or ameliorating aspects of ill-being.

Recent evidence from psychology and health sciences demonstrates that people are successful across multiple life domains not only because success increases people's well-being but also because high well-being engenders success in many life domains (Lyubomirsky, King and Diener, 2005; Fredrickson, 2004; Seligman, 2008). Thus the value of increasing athlete well-being is considerable because of its potential to elicit myriad benefits associated with health, social relationships and performance.

Compared with contemporary views of well-being as multidimensional, holistic and positive state based, enquiry and praxis in sport regarding athlete health and well-being present several disparities. In sport there is a predominant focus on physical and biological components rather than also including psychological and social components of well-being. In sport the manner in which athletes' health and well-being is addressed frequently adopts a medical model approach, which is one that focuses on pathology and alleviating illness/ill-being rather than promoting a positive state per se. The above two features are evident in the recent position statement from the International Olympic Association (2009) for guidance about periodic health checks for athletes. Further confusion in the area of athlete well-being in sport occurs with the conflation of the concepts of athlete well-being and athlete welfare (see Adie, Duda and Ntoumanis, 2008 for an example of this in sport science literature). Aligning support to counter negative states or conditions is only part of what might be achieved and without an awareness of well-being in HP sport it may be difficult to align services to purposively facilitate states of high well-being and flourishing in athletes.

Recognising how athlete well-being and athlete welfare are conceptualised by sports organisations such as National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs) is important in terms of developing a greater awareness of and responsiveness to prevalent discourse and cultural imperatives associated with participant well-being and welfare in organised sport. As a window through which organisations present their purpose, priorities and provision, websites are increasingly important reflectors of cultural values and practices. In the UK most NGBs are state supported organisations and have responsibility for awareness raising, signposting and guiding good practice within their sports. One area of required good practice is that associated with showing due regard for participant welfare and well-being. The following section of the paper presents details of one small study which sought to establish the visibility and nature of information about athlete welfare and athlete well-being on NGB websites as a reflection of praxis.

Method

The research was conducted in August 2008 and involved a review of the websites of 33 UK/GB/English governing bodies of sport (see Table 13.1 for list of NGBs). Sports were chosen for inclusion on the basis of being Olympic/Paralympic sports and/or having a high profile with a large participation base in the UK. Due to the public nature of the material prior permission to review the website was not sought. The focus of the review was twofold; i, to assess visibility of athlete well-being and athlete welfare information and ii, to explore the nature of material found relating to these terms.

Table 13.1 National Governing Bodies of sport included in the website review

Archery GNAA	Cycling BCF	Handball BHA	Rugby Union RFU	Tennis LTA
Athletics UKA	Equestrian BEF	Hockey EH	Sailing RYA	Triathlon BTA
Badminton BAE	Fencing BFA	Judo BJA	Shooting GBTSF	Volleyball EVA
Basketball EB	Ice Skating NISA	Mod. Pentathlon MPAGB	Squash ES	Weightlifting BWLA
Boxing ABA	Football FA	Netball EN	Swimming ASA	Wheelchair Basketball GBWBA
Canoeing BCU	Golf EGU	Rowing ARA	Table Tennis ETTA	
Cricket ECB	Gymnastics BG	Rugby League RFL	Taekwondo BTC	

Two approaches were used to examine the visibility information: first, assessing presence on the homepage and exploring links from the home page to any information on the topics of *welfare*, *athlete welfare*, *well-being* and *athlete well-being*; and secondly, searching for explicit terms via the site's search facility (26 of the 33 websites had a search facility). All four terms were used in the searches and data was recorded for number of *relevant* search items produced. Relevance was determined according to whether on reading the item the searched term was a key feature (overt or subtle) or whether it was simply a word or phrase with limited resonance to the rest of the item. Data considered in the analysis of visibility was the number of websites that returned information and the number of listed items associated with each term.

Hierarchical content analysis was used to explore in more detail the nature of information associated with well-being and welfare located through the search methods outlined above. In brief, the stages of analysis involved, identifying emergent themes from the first NGB data and clustering these themes to create loose superordinate themes which helped to guide the analysis of the second NGB data set. Convergence and divergence of themes was actively sought during the analysis process and as Smith and Osborne (2003) noted, the researcher

needs to be disciplined not only to discern repeating patterns but also to acknowledge new themes and emerging clusters. Each subsequent NGB data analysis was based on the latest iteration of superordinate themes and the fourth stage of analysis involved the prioritisation of superordinate themes for presentation.

Findings

Whilst there was considerable cross sport variation in the nature and amount of material relating to (athlete) well-being and (athlete) welfare, overall, it was not highly visible and in most cases was poorly represented. Whilst not questioning the implicit commitment to welfare and well-being of 33 of the largest NGBs in the UK, on homepages no explicit links or references to *athlete well-being*, *well-being* or *athlete welfare* were found, and only 4 websites had explicit reference to *welfare* from the home page (UKA, BG, RFL and EVA).

Of the 26 NGBs with a website search facility, the following are numbers of NGBs whose search facility produced at least one piece of explicit information involving the terms; *well-being* (13), *athlete well-being* (9), *welfare* (20) and *athlete welfare* (8). Producing data about the numbers of search items found for each NGB proved difficult for two reasons. Firstly there was considerable variability in the sensitivity of search facilities which meant that secondly, the consequent search materials produced were highly variable regarding relevance in overt or subtle ways to the searched term. Some search facilities on websites were set to search the web not the website, and other NGB -based search facilities produced considerable repetition of identical materials. Where the search engine was website based, all results (i.e. returned information) were reviewed up to a maximum number of 200. Though most websites had far fewer results, 200 was set as an upper limit for pragmatic reasons as it was deemed sufficient to have exhausted the emergence of new themes.

The content analysis of information found on websites for each of the 4 terms is presented in Figure 13.1. This figure shows core themes across all areas including: *safeguarding and child protection*, *codes of conduct* and *welfare officers*. The themes found in the specific domains of each searched term occurred in most cases for just one or two NGBs only and should not be perceived as widespread representations.

With four NGB exceptions (UKA, BG, BTA and EVA), the concept of welfare was narrowly conceived, centring predominantly or entirely on matters of child protection/safeguarding. Over 90% of all information found across all four searched terms produced items relating to mainly generic child protection/safeguarding information, which was expressed in highly consistent terminology across NGBs. Child protection is just one albeit very important issue associated with athlete welfare. In most cases material found for athlete well-being was identical to that found for athlete welfare, which reflects the close association of the concepts but also the limited consideration of the broader scope of athlete well-being. For example, material relating to considerations of HP athlete (adult or child) well-being/welfare was not found and thus was not evident as being formally distinguished from generic issues of child protection/safeguarding.

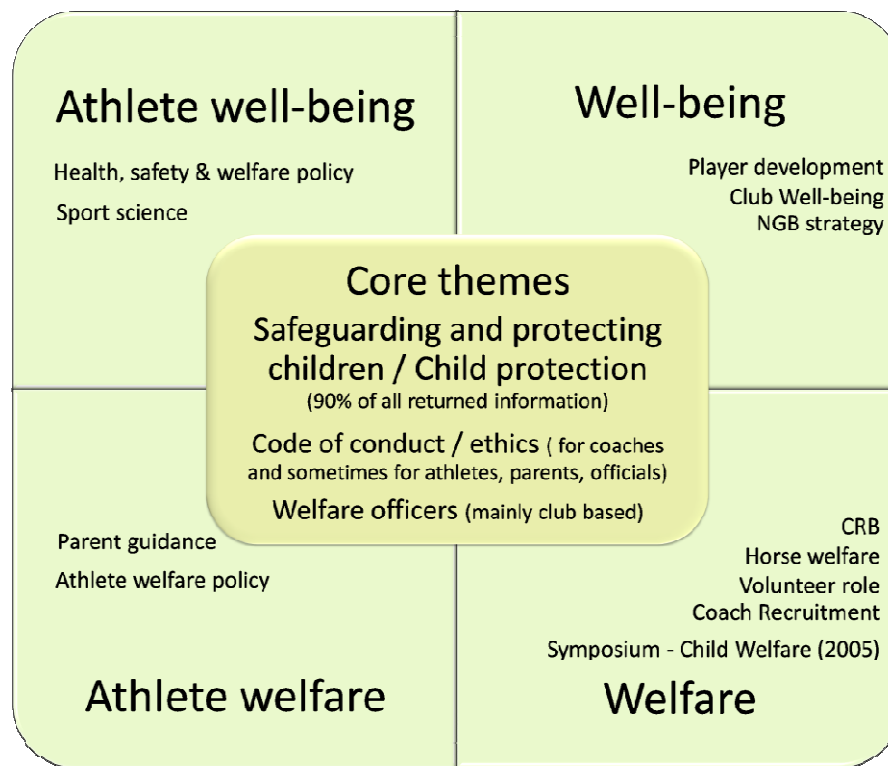


Figure 13.1 Core and domain specific themes across the 4 searched terms of athlete well-being, well-being, athlete welfare and welfare

To illustrate the broader scope of athlete well-being just a few examples of issues worth investigating could include; well-being and transitions within and out of sport; exploring relationships between health, well-being and performance; the impact on athlete well-being of perceived organisational stressors; the role of mentors in promoting the well-being of HP athletes; short and long-term well-being outcomes of a sport-life balance; the impact on well-being of optimising rest and recovery; the effects on rehabilitation of high well-being; romantic partnerships and athlete well-being; and, the impact of training intensity and competition frequency on athlete health and injury status (recently the focus of a Rugby Football Union investigation; RFU, 2009).

Given that there are so many issues which could be deemed relevant to athlete well-being a question arises about why is information focused on athlete well-being so limited? Andersen (2006) and Douglas and Carless (2006) describe how the dominance of a performance ethic in elite sport often narrows enquiry into aspects of athletes' lives, to specific and immediate performance-related issues. A common argument heard in high performance sport settings relates to dismissing or questioning the relevance of well-being to performance objectives (Leahy, 2008; Brady and Maynard, 2010). Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005, p. 844) describe a commonly held belief against promoting well-being relevant to HP sport contexts which implies people with high well-being are 'satisfied with the status quo and they are not

motivated to accomplish new goals or 'change the world'. The authors countered this point by stating that whilst people with high well-being are generally more satisfied, far from preventing them from being achievement oriented, they are more likely to seek new and challenging goals. Thus HP athletes may be able to achieve such great feats precisely because (or when) they have high well-being and experience reciprocity in the upward spiral of well-being, personal growth, health and achievement. In this sense athletes with high well-being may be healthier and more successful compared to athletes with low well-being. Far from being irrelevant in elite sport, greater focus on athlete well-being might serve well the pursuit of sustainable high performance.

Though there are many factors that impact directly on athlete well-being, a concern is that they are often considered separately by disciplines and/or practitioners and thus as an explicit topic in its own right athlete well-being can become fragmented and relegated in sport stakeholder's consciousness. Maguire (1991) foresaw a problem in sport research that Hoberman (1992) referred to as a technological deconstruction of the athlete through science. Such disjointedness in approaches to understanding issues in HP sport may add to practices which focus on micro rather than macro issues i.e. situating issues at the athlete subcomponent level, rather than a broader exploration of holistic or even the social context and role of other agents. Maguire (1991) called for the reintegration of disciplines and interdisciplinary alliances to consider athletes as whole people, which along with HP sport practitioner alliances could facilitate greater coherence in the consideration of athlete well-being.

The frequency of limited representations found in this review predicates a discourse which inadequately portrays the contemporary landscape of athlete well-being issues. When presented in a user-friendly format, knowledge generated by applied sport researchers using interdisciplinary approaches has much to offer sport organisations about understanding and supporting athlete well-being and developing cognate athlete welfare policies and practices. Hence, the limited representations found raise questions and present opportunities for NGBs and sport researchers.

It is important to acknowledge that NGB websites vary enormously in sophistication with many still evolving at pace. Content hosted is unlikely to be everything that is available although it is likely to be that which has been prioritised. It is important to acknowledge that this research used a snapshot approach to review well-being and welfare related content during one month in 2008. It is likely that some websites (and hopefully many) will have updated both material and its accessibility since the review was undertaken and future enquiry will attest to this. A key point to consider is the subjective nature of analysis used to judge the content and the relevance of material to the searched term. Paradoxically though, analysing material was rarely highly challenging because of the lack of variety in the range and the standard nature of much of the information generated, reflecting the narrow view and conflation of notions associated with both well-being and welfare in sport.

Conclusions

Findings from contemporary well-being research have significant implications for the sporting context because based on outcomes for other populations, increasing athlete well-being may have positive and reciprocal consequences for health, coping and achievement which are central to successful experiences in sport. Based on this review it would appear that on NGB websites material relating to athlete well-being and athlete welfare was not highly visible from home pages nor necessarily easy to find using the search facility (where available) located on the website. The concepts of athlete well-being and athlete welfare were not clearly distinguished from each other and frequently searches produced the same material which mainly reflected a generic child welfare discourse, i.e. based on situational factors such as safeguarding policies and welfare officers.

Regarding the nature of well-being material, findings reflect a lack of clarity about athlete well-being within sport and disparity with contemporary views of well-being in broader society. Explanations for the limited way in which athlete well-being is conveyed in HP sport have been related to ideas within performance environments about; achieving excellence in sport, the predominance of physical and biological approaches to athlete well-being, a pathology oriented approach to addressing well-being, and a traditional segregation of disciplinary enquiry into aspects associated with athlete well-being.

A need exists to extend our well-being vocabulary and our practices to best cultivate an environment in which we understand how to promote HP athlete well-being and flourishing. As a consequence of the present review several recommendations are forwarded and include: i) the need to extend current conceptualisations of athlete well-being beyond those currently used by sport organisations and sport researchers in the UK; ii) for stakeholders in UK sport to formally recognise further welfare imperatives (beyond safeguarding) and participatory contexts (beyond children in non-elite settings) in the articulation of welfare policies and practices; and iii) for many NGBs to increase the website visibility and accessibility of athlete well-being and athlete welfare information.

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Chapter 14: *The price behind the beauty of the Olympic performance in women's artistic gymnastics during the period 1972-1988*

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Overview

Some of the most attractive competitions in the entire history of the Olympic Games were competitions in the aesthetic sports. Aesthetic sports are sports which are evaluated by judges – people - and not with independent measurement instrument. For success in these sports it is not enough to have good developed athletics skills and abilities: aesthetic components also play a major role, such as a sense for music, rhythm and arts. It is obvious that each aesthetic sport is not simply sport, it is in many ways an art performance. Typical aesthetic sports are artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics and figure skating. In all these sports it is interesting that competitors are the youngest participants at the Olympic Games over the last 30 years, especially in women's competitions. The Olympic champions have averaged 16 years of age, enduring serious training at a very early age. This poses a question: how does serious work influence on the child's physical, motor, cognitive, emotional and social development? What is the price behind the beauty of the aesthetic sports for a child, who is, at 15 years old, a full time employee in a senior national team? The question of human rights in youth sport therefore arises (David, 2005). This chapter presents data from a study of women's Olympic champions in the aesthetic Olympic sports; specifically, medallists in the Olympic Games between 1972 and 2008.

Cases from history

One of the most cited cases is the phenomenon of Nadia Comăneci. She was the first athlete in Olympic history to receive a perfect ten, the highest score possible for exercises in gymnastics. This happened at the Olympic Games in 1976. Nadia was written into human history as the first athlete who reached perfection in sport. At that time Nadia was only 14 years of age and from viewing images of her at that time it is obvious that her level of development was still lower in comparison with average children her age. After the 1976 Olympics everybody in the world of women's gymnastics wanted to reach the level of Nadia. That meant serious work in gymnastics in early childhood. It should be noted that Nadia was not the first 'child champion' in the aesthetic sports on the Olympic podium. Olga Korbut, from Belarus, competed at the Olympic Games in 1972. Olga effectively changed the world of *women's* Olympic gymnastics to *girl's* Olympic gymnastics. Nadia expanded and advanced this development.

In the 1980s more and more young competitors reached the gymnastics podium. From today's perspective, it seems that Olympic champions in women's gymnastics in 1980, 1984 and 1988 were 12 and 13 year old children. To protect child athletes from too intensive training and serious injuries in early ages, the International Gymnastics Federation raised the minimum age

for competing in women's senior level competitions from 14 to 15 in 1981, and again from 15 to 16 in 1997. Bruno Grandi, the president of the International Federation of Gymnastics, even tried to move the competition age up to 18 in an effort to protect child gymnasts from intense training because the pre-adolescent athlete is most vulnerable to injury. An upward age shift, however, was opposed by important members of the gymnastic world.

Today, past Olympic champions speak out about the consequences of hard work and winning Olympic medals during their childhood. It is therefore important to study the history of Olympic aesthetic sports with the goal of developing them safely in the future.

Outline of methods

The research used anthropological approaches. It was carried out on a sample of women's Olympic champions in the aesthetic Olympic sports; specifically, medallists in the Olympic Games from 1972 until 2008. The data were collected from the newspapers, documentaries, interviews and autobiographies of athletes. The analysis focused on:

- statements by athletes in the media (television shows, newspaper interviews) and autobiographies;
- statements of sport journalists (documentaries, newspaper columns, Olympic competition reports, Olympic museum in Lausanne);
- movies, based on the biography of the elite athlete's life (*Nadia*, *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes*, *Perfect Body*).

Key research findings

From the material analysed it was found that an international career in the aesthetic sports was very short, usually four or five years. It started with training at approximately the age of 6; at the age of 9, athletes trained 6 hours a day, and at the age of 12 they enrolled in the national senior team doing 8 hours training each day. Most Olympic medal winners finished their sport career at the age of 16 or 17.

Injuries were, in most cases, the significant reason for ending the sport career. Many winners retired immediately after reaching their goal of an Olympic gold medal. These processes can be understood as systematic and planned activities of national federations and coaches. This raises a question: how much do these coaches listen to the voices of athletes and their wishes? Interestingly, in the 1990s, athletes competed in the international arena longer despite achieving poorer. A good example was gymnast Oksana Chusovitina (born on the 19th of June, 1975 in Uzbekistan). She competed at the Olympic Games in Beijing at the age of 33 having first enrolled in international competitions in 1991 at the age of 16.

The price of becoming Olympic champion during the period 1972-1988 was found to be very high. Analysis of the data revealed the following sacrifices:

Falsifying personal documents (changing the date of birth)

Without asking for his permission, but rather communicating him their decision, they told my father that they had to modify my age by changing in the passport the year when I was born. Practically, instead of 1982 they wrote 1981. I.e. they made me one year older than I was. They explained to my father that it was my only chance to get at the Olympic Games.
(Alexandra Marinescu)

One of the officials of the Federation told me 'look at the passport, from today you're not 13 years old anymore but 15.' Nobody asked me if I agreed to this, I was just a child. They needed gold medals and everybody who was involved in gymnastics knew about these practices".
(Daniela Silivas)

Eating disorders (which, in some cases, caused death)

You could fail anything during training and it was not such a tragedy as when they discovered that we were one kilo fatter. This was not accepted and we had become to be terrified by diet.
(Alexandra Marinescu)

Dietary restrictions on me while growing up led to numerous injuries due to the 'dark side of the elite gymnastics scene' where young girls are put under intense pressure to perform.
(Dominique Moceanu)

That's how it all starts out. Watching everything, trying to be extremely slim. Then it develops into an obsessiveness. Christy was counting calories and she had been doing what she had been taught to do. To Christy, Al [her coach] was God. No matter what he told her to do, she was going to do it. (Mother of Christy Henrich, who died by the age of 22 from multiple organ system failure caused by anorexia nervosa and bulimia)

Psychological and physical abuses

In all developmental areas (physical, cognitive, emotional, and social), except motor development, the gymnasts were found to be under the expected level of human development for their age. Their development immediately increases after retirement or after stopping their training for some period. Overnight the little gymnasts become adults. In addition, many elite coaches try to control every aspect of a gymnast's life.

As a former national team member, I can say that there are a ton of sacrifices made by people like us to be at the top. The thing is we chose it. If you don't like it, quit. I don't promote unhealthy eating or competing on broken limbs, but there are sacrifices. It is the only path we know will get Olympic champions.
(Anonymous)

I realized that the girls were going through an enormous stress; they were living with a permanent fright of the coaches. I noticed them biting their nails, which was already an involuntary gesture, and they didn't even notice when they started bleeding. And then I also saw them going to the bathroom very often, for fear. (Alexandra Marinescu, after arrival in Deva [high profile gymnastics school in Romania])

They stole my youth. As soon as I got off the awards stand I was a slave again. I'm happier now than I was then. (Aurelia Dobre)

She [the coach] beat me real hard, but I was lucky to get off cheaply. 'We'll settle our accounts at the hotel' she whistled to me. (Alexandra Marinescu)

Scoring the 10.00 was the biggest moment for me, but at the time I didn't realize how big it was, and how everything was going to change after that. I was just a kid, I wanted to go home! (Nadia Comaneci)

The pressure was on me to win at all cost and that I always had to eat right and work out all the time, and even if you did something good it wasn't good enough for the coaches. (Anonymous)

This type of acceptable child abuse was going on years ago. (Olga Korbut)

The Karolyis took the products of American gyms from all over the USA and formed a very profitable business, with emphasis on the "business". The politics the Karolyis' use to get these producing gymnast's is evident in the Olympic team selection process - the gymnast not going through the Karolyis' camp hugely reduces her chance to make the team. (Anonymous)

I was lucky that I was from Bucharest and my parents were close. They used to come to see me in secret, without being seen by the coaches. They used to bring me some biscuits or a wafer and they would ask me how I was doing. I never told them how hard it was for me and how many things I needed, because I didn't want to keep them always worried. (Alexandra Marinescu)

I thought it is normal until I get older and realize how twisted and manipulative that whole process is, just to win! (Anonymous)

Injuries

Injuries were the most visible component of the price of success. Besides physical injuries there was also psychological damage to these athletes, some of which became obvious many years after their sport careers had ended.

If I brought Ana Maria here in her wheel-chair, you would say we were at Paralympics. (Octavian Belu, Romanian women's gymnastics selector and head coach, at the awards ceremony in Atlanta, 1996, when Karoly took Kerry Strug on his arms to the podium).

I'm sure Bela saw injuries, but if you were injured, Bela didn't want to see it. You had to deal with it. I was intimidated. He looked down on me. He was 6-feet something, and I was 4-foot nothing.
(Dominique Moceanu)

It would be a lot more damaging to prevent her from doing what she dreams of doing. If she was at a lower level, you'd probably say enough is enough. But when she's an international elite that does have this ability, I would never take that away from a kid. If you have a talented violinist, you wouldn't tell him he can't play because his fingers are crooked. (Mother of Lindsey Vanden Eykel, who tore her hamstring and the growth plate off her pelvic bone while competing on the vault in 2001)

The first thing they do is accuse you of making it up. That's the last thing I wanted them to think. So you hold it in until it gets really bad, until you can't walk.
(Sheehan Lemley)

I was ignored when injured and forced to push through the pain. That type of pushing is what ended my career.
(Anonymous)

I was a gymnast but not any more I had to have shoulder surgery because my shoulder wouldn't even stay in its socket I was having an off day and I told my coach that but she insisted I go ahead and do my tumbling routine anyways (a week before competition) so I did and I went sideways and my shoulder popped out and my ligaments had stretched so much that they kind of tore away from the bone and then she had me put up in a cheering stunt and when they caught me it popped out again. So not only couldn't I compete I now have pins in my shoulder just because my coach wouldn't listen to me. My coach only cared about winning and she didn't care about me and how I felt.
(Anonymous)

Discussion and suggestions for future research

It is a fact that excellence in any sports requires intense, constant training, to the exclusion of many other aspects of normal life. One cannot be expected to win without any cost. To even think that being the best of the best is going to happen without a major struggle is unrealistic.

For training in aesthetic sports, as in musical training, it is often unforgivable to take even one day off. With no time for rest, physical and psychological exhaustion can lead to injuries. The athletes train and compete with injuries which can be recognized from their taped joints, something which is not as common in other sports. In the future it is necessary to investigate how many suffer, and in what way medically, during the course of their life after winning a gold medal. Beside injuries, there is often an attempt to keep girls from reaching puberty by limiting

their weight and increasing workout hours. All other areas of development are restricted, especially social development (because of isolation and obedience to authorities) and emotional development (because of high self-consciousness and low self-image). One of the most critical issues is the weight of young girls in aesthetic sports. Weight is an important part of training and competition. Top athletes watch their diet closely and know precisely what they are doing. But the question arises: is it possible to be competitive in aesthetic sports without starving and pushing one's own body to its limits?

So, who is responsible for child abuse in sport? Some have blamed coaches. The Karoly gymnastic dynasty is the most often criticised because it has a lot of power in the United States and world gymnastics. Some are of the opinion that the Karolyis produced winners at a terrible cost. But it should also be pointed out that Kerri Strug went back to Bela Karoly after she recovered because there was no one else who could prepare her better than he could. The argument is made that coaches must win to stay as coaches and they will therefore do whatever they can to win; yet that does not give them the right to mentally and physically harm young women. If the cost of winning is the cost of these young women having to be nearly destroyed then it is not worth it. A coach has great influence on the child. The girls in aesthetics sports are taught to be obedient, and the best of them always are: they will do whatever the coach says. The authority of the coach is very significant. In most cases at the elite level, the coach controls the whole life of the athlete. With an increase in training years there is also an increase in the role played by the coach in a child's life, eventually overtaking the power of their parents.

The blame is also put on the parents, especially when they get 'Olympic fever'. Many girls in aesthetic sports start to train at a very young age before they can decide what sports they want to do. Their career in aesthetic sports often starts at the age of 8 or certainly not later than 10. As a result, it is a career choice made by the parents rather than the child. The gymnasts' careers have started with the help of an adult and even when they get hurt their parents tend to pressurize them somewhat to encourage them to continue training. Highly motivated parents know exactly what is going on: they have the choice to allow or not to allow their children to go through such training. The strongest reason that parents contribute to this type of child abuse in sport is the fact that they are living their lives through their children.

This is a similar situation to that in classical or popular music and with young movie stars. It seems that girls have to sacrifice the childhood portion of their life for the fame and accomplishment of the whole family. Young children do not choose and cannot say no, which is why there is so much abuse in any given area for some children. They accept what adults tell them, think they are being cared for, and trust that what they are involved in will benefit them. The child will do anything for affection, attention and love. The 10 year old child does not know enough, and is not powerful enough to stand up to their parents and the coaches.

However, it is interesting that, besides the issue of parents and coaches, the girls in this study themselves often expressed a high level of obsession with the elite sport way of life. It seemed that all had the same dream and believed that they were doing the right thing. This is the sport

triangle of coach, parents and athletes. All three sides need to have shared values to put and keep the child in elite sport.

In this research it could be seen that the athletes did what it took to win. It was demonstrated that the only successful and 'proper' way to prepare these girls to win in elite level competition was thought to be through abusive practices. Their results proved that this is a successful way of winning. Being an Olympian means having to make a lot of sacrifices. If the gold medal is what you want, then that is the way to get it. Therefore other questions arise: is the price paid to win worth the cost? Can national or international success be achieved without damaging the competitor? And finally, what happens to those who don't make it?

Everyone likes a winner and wants to be a winner. They all have the same dream. But are gold medals equated to balanced, happy adults? What is more important, gold medals or a happy, productive society? Or maybe both can be reached at the same time? Where is it most appropriate to draw the line between play and work, joy and struggle, success and failure? The answers are hidden behind the values of our society.

Conclusions

The results of this research suggest that it is necessary to raise the age limit in aesthetic Olympic sports competitions to 18 at the time of the Olympic competition. The rule of 18+ is regular in most Olympic sports and artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics and figure skating should not be exceptions to this rule.

The Olympic Games not only involve performances of muscular strength, skills and abilities, but also beauty and the expression of human movement. The most important Olympic messengers of this human beauty are the aesthetic sports. The routines in aesthetic sports can be very difficult but do gymnasts also reach artistic perfection?

If, in the future, acrobatic difficulty is the only criterion considered important, then the beauty of human movement will be lost and the Olympic Games will become the Games of purely physical bodies. As a result, the psychological, sociological and cognitive part of human beings – the most remarkable parts of the human creature - will be forgotten.

It is time for the Olympic gymnastics competition to return to *women* rather than *girls*, bringing back the gracefulness of adult artistic gymnasts such as Larissa Latynina, Ludmilla Tourischeva and Věra Čáslavská. Their sport performances represented the meaning of the Olympic values - peace, happiness, friendship and building a better world.

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Chapter 15: A touchy subject? The (unintended) consequences of child protection regulations on youth swimming coaches

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Overview

This chapter discusses one of the key findings from a study into good practice in competitive youth swimming – how child protection and safeguarding regulations are resulting in coaches avoiding all forms of child touch in order to protect themselves from false allegations of abuse and/or poor practice. It begins by offering an overview of the development of child protection regulations in British sport, and in swimming in particular, before highlighting the impact that child safety discourses have had on adult-child settings, including sports coaching. An outline of the methods used in the study is then presented, followed by a discussion of the key themes. To conclude, the central messages for policymakers and sports organisations are presented.

The development of child protection regulations in British sport

When Olympic swimming coach Paul Hickson was convicted in 1995 of the rape and sexual assaults of young athletes under his care, the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), swimming's governing body in England and Hickson's employer, reacted by embarking on a strategy aimed at protecting its tens of thousands of competitive youth swimmers, introducing one of the first child protection policies of any sports association and educating coaches on good practice. Since then, research in sport has confirmed the existence of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse across various sports, including swimming (Fasting *et al.*, 2004; Gervis and Dunn, 2004; Kirby *et al.*, 2000; Stirling, 2007). In reaction, the UK has placed itself at the vanguard of protecting children from abuse in sport (Kerr and Stirling, 2008; Turner and McCrory, 2004): National governing bodies of sport (NGBs) are now obliged to embed and disseminate child protection policies in order to receive funding (Child Protection in Sport Unit, 2003), coaches with regular contact with children are required to have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and to attend child protection awareness training (Brackenridge, 2001; Kerr and Stirling, 2008; Turner and McCrory, 2004), and the government has established an independent body, the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), to regulate and advise on child protection issues within sport (Boocock, 2002; David, 2005; Turner and McCrory, 2004).

During this time, several high-profile cases of and inquiries into child abuse, both within and outside of sport (see for example, Butler-Sloss, 1988; Department of Health/Welsh Office, 2000) have led scholars in various fields to argue that social anxiety about child abuse has become a 'moral panic' (Brackenridge, 2001; Furedi and Bristow, 2008; Piper *et al.*, 2006; Wallace, 1995), particularly in relation to child sexual abuse, which dominates current child abuse discourses (Farmer and Boushel, 1999; Freeman, 2000; Hudson, 1992). Some argue that

this climate has created an environment in which safety from abuse defines every act of adult-child touch as suspicious, resulting in all adults who work with children being positioned as suspicious and child-related settings becoming no-touch zones (Furedi and Bristow, 2008; Jones, 2004; Jones, 2009; McWilliam, 2001, 2003; McWilliam and Jones, 2005; Piper *et al.*, 2006). In a climate so focused on the potential of adults to harm children, coaches, like other adults working *in loco parentis*, have become objects of distrust and attention is increasingly being paid to adult-child interaction. In sport, much of this attention is focused on how coaches interact with their athletes. Meanwhile, most scholarly attention has focused on coaching transgressions from athletes' viewpoint. Research on the impact of this intensified attention on coaches is limited. After more than a decade of legislative and regulatory changes aimed at protecting children in sport, little is known about how such strategies are interpreted and enacted by coaches. How have tightened child protection regulations impacted on the job of coaching? Given the dearth of research on this topic (a notable exception being Bringer, 2002), this chapter uses data from an ethnographic study of swimming coaches to offer some initial insights into how coaches working with competitive youth swimmers feel child protection regulations are impacting on their practice.

Methods

Data collection was via participant observations of 17 competitive squads at three purposefully sampled ASA-affiliated swimming clubs in the north of England, followed by semi-structured interviews with 11 ASA-qualified coaches and one poolside helper at these clubs. The research was approved by the author's university ethical advisory committee and all clubs and participants were guaranteed anonymity; pseudonyms are used throughout this paper. All 13 coaches from competitive squads at the three clubs consented to be observed. Participants were between 22 and 60 years old and four were women. Observations lasted between seven and ten weeks at each club until sufficient data had been gathered to inform the interview questions and theoretical saturation had been reached (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Most observations were of pool sessions, although land-based training and competitions also were observed at two clubs as these were scheduled during the observation periods. Table 15.1 details the clubs, coaches and poolside helpers that participated.

Participants were approached to take part in interviews towards the end of observations, when regular close contact had enabled a degree of rapport to be developed (MacPhail, 2004). Eleven of the 13 coaches involved in observations consented to be interviewed; one declined and one could not be contacted for an interview because he left the club during the observation period. Interviews lasted between 50 minutes and two hours and were recorded. To ensure methodological rigour, anonymised transcripts of interviews and extracts of interviews with examples of the researcher's interpretations were sent to participants for comment.

Data analysis was ongoing and began during observations. Using the principles of Grounded Theory, broad emergent themes in observational notes and interview transcripts were repeatedly identified and coded using both descriptive and *in vivo* labels (Glaser and Strauss,

1967). These were then re-examined for similarities, differences and patterns and categories strengthened, created or re-defined accordingly as the analysis deepened.

Table 15.1 Clubs and participants in observations and interviews

	Seals		Eels		Dolphins	
	Interview?		Interview?		Interview?	
Club Level	Elite		Sub Elite		'Low'	
Head Coach	Andrew	Yes	Amanda	Yes	Jim	Yes
Assistant Coaches	Steven	Yes	Keith	Yes	Kevin	Yes
	John	Yes	Dave	Yes	–	–
	Mike	Yes	Frank	No	–	–
	Chris	Yes	Helen	No	–	–
	Jenny	Yes	–	–	–	–
Poolside Helpers	–	–	Sheila	Yes	–	–

Findings and discussion

Avoidance of child touch

For the coaches in this study, discourses of child safety that have conflated abusive touch with caring touch and made all physical contact suspicious resulted in coaches avoiding touching athletes. For example, in an instructional context coaches were observed only touching athletes with floats when illustrating body or hand positioning during training, and calling swimmers' parents down from spectating areas and onto the poolside so they, rather than the coach, could manipulate a child's hands or feet. Similarly, in discussions coaches talked of avoiding physical contact with swimmers by, for example, demonstrating swimming stroke technique on other adults or through videos and books. Moreover, when coaches discussed situations in which child touch was unavoidable, such as when an elated child swimmer initiates a congratulatory hug – situations that arose due to coaches' positions as pastoral carers – they talked of limiting their touch, either by avoiding reciprocation or by regulating their touch to specific, 'non-sexualised' parts of the child's body, such as above the shoulders and below the knees. Coaches also discussed avoiding congratulating or commiserating with athletes in a physical manner, opting instead to shake hands or give 'hive fives,' even though they felt this approach lacked warmth and sensitivity.

Underpinning the coaches' fears of child touch was anxiety regarding a potentially career-ending allegation of abuse:

Nowadays you've got to be so careful about how you handle a kid and how you communicate with them ... you can't be left on your own with a child anymore because people jump to the wrong conclusions and can make allegations even if nobody has done anything. (Jenny)

My main worry is being accused of something that you've not done, so the main thing is not being alone with a swimmer at any time so accusations can't be made. (Mike)

Jones (2004) argues that the contemporary portrayal of children as potential child abuse victims leads to a corollary depiction of all adults as potential abusers. In a climate where wider social discourses focus on the potential of all adults to harm children, and where coaches and other adults are positioned as potential child abusers, these coaches understood themselves as both objects of distrust and objects of vulnerability, that is as 'risky' subjects (i.e.: of risk to children) and, simultaneously, 'at risk' of being accused of abuse. Consequently, the coaches learned to anticipate this risk and manage it by understanding coach professionalism to include 'safe' practice, which in this case equated to touch avoidance. Given these fears, the coaches based their practice on fears of false accusation rather than on concerns for children's protection. In other words, "[b]y 'managing' risk [the coaches] create the illusion of controlling [their] destiny" (Piper *et al.*, 2006, p. 154).

Awareness of discourses of risk was also gendered. Although coaches of both sexes identified themselves as at risk, that is, vulnerable to false accusations of abuse, several coaches engaged with dominant discourses of child safety that position men as more risky subjects than women:

I think in the current climate as a woman you're more able to say and to do things unreservedly, whereas a man wouldn't be ... I think a man would be more likely to be accused if he shouted, erm, I don't know, whereas a woman wouldn't ... maybe if a man had made a child cry when coaching, they would be out, but if it were a woman that would be more acceptable. (Sheila)

I think it does make a difference being a man because you're a bit, erm, more under suspicion ... and people might question why you do it. (Kevin)

Research with primary school teachers, nurses, child minders and parents suggests both men and women consider males more risky subjects than females and, consequently, that men are more likely to consciously avoid touching others, particularly children (Jones, 2004; Piper and Smith, 2003). In sport, it has been suggested that male coaches are becoming more cautious in their coaching following increased concerns about allegations of sexual harassment and abuse (Bringer, 2002; Hassall *et al.*, 2002). However, while the coaches in this study positioned men as representing more of a threat and, therefore, more subject to the corresponding risk of being accused of abuse, both male and female coaches reported feeling equally vulnerable to false allegations of abuse.

The coaches were equally unanimous about the impact of being positioned as objects of distrust. Operating under a cloud of suspicion gave rise to anger, resentment and exasperation:

My bugbear is that the way it is now, we're all seen as under suspicion, when in fact the number of cases of abuse in swimming is tiny. I hate that and I don't want my staff to feel like they're being put under suspicion. [Child protection] concerns the News of the World, that's it. ... I guess they had a problem with a couple of coaches, a couple of teachers and they decided it'd be better if all the kids suffer. It's ridiculous. ... I'm sick of being seen as an abuser.
(Andrew)

... teachers and coaches, people involved with children, it's put issues up where they possibly shouldn't be. Those issues have always been there but now they're major, you know, you can't touch them, you can't do this, you can't do that. It drives you mad sometimes.
(Jim)

In particular, the privileging of the discourse of fear and the resulting pressures of meeting child safety standards left coaches feeling constrained, unable to carry out their coaching duties to their fullest ability and prevented from adopting the more holistic role of pastoral carer that they believed to be beneficial to athletes (Borrie, 1998; Cote *et al.*, 1995; Jones *et al.*, 2003; Martens, 1996):

To say that swimming lessons shouldn't really be taught in the water or there are guidelines that you shouldn't really touch a child when you're teaching them to swim, I mean, you've got to. You've got to touch a child to help them ride a bike. [In swimming] you've got to touch them. You've got to say, 'you put your arm in there and you pull it back to there,' because at a young age they don't know what to do. ... That contact is really important. It's absolutely critical to technique ... and to developing a solid, trusting relationship with your swimmers.
(Andrew)

The relationship you have now with your swimmer feels a little bit ... coach-swimmer rather than mentor-swimmer like it used to be. You have to be so many things as a coach ... in swimming the funding's not there to have a nutritionist, the funding's not there to have a physio ... a psychologist, so you have to be a nutritionist, a physio, a psychologist, a friend, a role model ... but you almost sometimes feel like your hands are tied.
(Steven)

Jones (2004) found that primary school teachers welcomed the modern, more regulated environment and the distance this opened up between themselves and their pupils, with many arguing it equates to 'more professional' relationships. On the contrary, the coaches in this study felt the introduction of child protection regulations and the concurrent discourse of fear had rendered them less effective coaches and undermined their relationships with athletes. For the coaches in this study, the discourse of child safety was so powerful it toppled other discourses surrounding effective athlete and child development. Consequently, even though the coaches considered their adherence to child safety norms to have a negative impact on

athletes, understanding of the damaging consequences of failure to adhere to accepted standards meant they avoided destabilising this discourse and instead modified their behaviour to conform to socially accepted norms.

Managing risk: Working in a goldfish bowl

Against this backdrop of fear, a key aspect of reducing the risk posed by working with children was coach visibility. So pervasive was the fear of being falsely accused of abuse that all coaches welcomed working in a culture of compulsory visibility:

Some of the older female swimmers might go and give Jim a cuddle. It's one of those instances that could be interpreted as harmless or the wrong thing to do ... and that depends on the circumstances ... and where it's done. If it's done on pool where there's other people watching, then that's probably OK, that's probably the right place to do it because everyone can see what you're doing. (Kevin)

... you make sure you touch them in the right place, you just touch their hand or their arm to point things out but you've also got to make sure you do it in clear view of everyone else, you never do it by yourself. (John)

The coaches recognised that direct observation by others enabled them to position themselves as 'safe' and so welcomed being under constant surveillance. In many cases, the architecture of the pool where the coaches worked facilitated observation. Swimming pools are designed as large fields of visibility in which anything an individual is doing can be observed by multiple others. In addition, on the poolside at all three clubs, coaches were in view of numerous people – up to eight coaches, poolside helpers and lifeguards worked together at any one time on the poolside, while spectators watched coached sessions from behind glass walls or elevated platforms.

Occasions when architecture or public view could not guarantee observability, such as when coaches held private meetings with athletes or supervised closed-door land training sessions, were a source of particular anxiety for the coaches. In such instances, coaches went to great lengths to ensure they were perpetually visible by, for example, inviting other coaches or parents to observe their sessions, leaving doors ajar or, in some cases, refusing to enter rooms or changing areas until another adult was present. Observability had become a normal element of these coaches' lives. Indeed, the ASA child protection policy also explicitly links visibility with safe coaches, advising coaches to: "Avoid one-to-one situations with a swimmer except in an unavoidable emergency," "Make sure you have another adult accompanying you," and "Get teachers/coaches/club officials to work in pairs" (ASA, 2004, p. 15). A good coach, it seems, is an observable coach.

Coaches wished to have another coach or parent present in order to ensure they were seen to be innocent. The point of another individual's gaze, therefore, is that there is nothing to see (Jones, 2004); the second individual is there to witness that 'nothing happened.'

Policing the self: Internalising the gaze

While the coaches welcomed the external gaze of others, the possibility of this constant surveillance prompted them to become auditors of their own behaviour:

A lot of the time you have to be very, very conscious of what you're doing. I feel that I'm quite a natural coach in terms of my coaching style just occurs and quite often I have to stop and think about what I'm doing. (Steven)

As a coach I've got to be so careful and I think we try to drum that into coaches here. ... I would never ever get in the water without a T-shirt and I'm always very, very conscious of where my hands are. (Amanda)

Aware of their relentless observability, the coaches internalised the behaviours considered normative in a youth swimming context – standards drawn in this case from child safety discourses – and monitored their own behaviour to adhere to this standard (Jones *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, they policed their behaviour by avoiding child touch and, if this was impossible, by ensuring physical contact could be seen both by themselves and by anyone watching, thus constituting it as 'innocent.'

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the impact that child protection regulations have had on youth swimming coaches, namely how fear of being falsely accused of abuse, has led coaches to avoid touching young athletes. It has argued that this outcome is linked to the current privileging of child safety discourses and coaches' understandings of themselves as positioned within these discourses as objects of distrust, resulting in them behaving like both potential aggressor and victim of an as-yet unperpetrated crime rather than trained sports professionals. The findings reported here are based on a small-scale research project in youth swimming; further research that involves a larger sample and coaches from across different sports is needed, as well as the views of children and young people and their parents on child protection regulations and on instructional touch in a sporting setting.

The potential outcome of adopting a worst-case-scenario approach and avoiding child touch is that coaches feel they are restricted in performing their job effectively. As the coaches noted, touch is an essential part of good coaching. Yet the coaches in this study expressed confusion and exasperation at the paradox in which they find themselves and lamented the increasing distance they felt this was placing between them and their athletes. An environment in which coaches feel unable to carry out their duties to the best of their abilities and are alienated from the young people to whom they dedicate so much of their time is potentially damaging for coaches, athletes and sport as a whole.

Most coaches are law-abiding, caring individuals who dedicate vast amounts of time to the sport they love for little or no remuneration. Yet working in an environment where they are under constant scrutiny and suspicion could prompt good coaches to leave the sport, while still others could be discouraged from getting involved in the first place. In addition, the coaches in this study perceived the contemporary culture of mistrust surrounding adults who work with children and the concomitant fear of false accusations of abuse to be eroding the relationship they have with young athletes. This risks weakening the bond between coaches and athletes that psychologists consider essential for athletic success (Poczwardowski *et al.*, 2002; Jowett, 2007) and, as others have noted in relation to wider society (Furedi, 2001; Furedi and Bristow, 2008), limits the potential of adults to protect children and young people from potential dangers by creating an 'adult-protection first' culture.

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Chapter 16: *Prevention and management of sexual harassment and abuse in Quebec sport organizations*

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Overview

Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in sport is an emerging research field. Since the problem was identified in sport, researchers have pointed out many recommendations to protect athletes from diverse types of abuse. Today, however, it is reasonable to ask what is being done in sport organisations in this regard. European studies have dealt with sexual harassment and abuse prevention through the broader perspective of child protection in sport (Brackenridge, 2004; Brackenridge *et al.*, 2004; Bringer *et al.*, 2002; Malkin *et al.*, 2000). The results of these studies show that few protection measures exist in sport organisations. Moreover, several obstacles seem to hamper the implementation of such measures. The main obstacles are a tendency to deny or minimise the problem, a lack of resources, fear and administrative difficulties. Studies have also pointed to a policy void relating to child protection among sport federations and affiliated local clubs (Brackenridge, 2002, 2004, 2006; Brackenridge *et al.*, 2004). Thus, the child protection measures implemented by higher-level organisations only very rarely reach lower-level organisations. To date, there have been no studies describing sexual harassment and abuse prevention in sport in Quebec and Canada. This chapter thus sets out to describe the measures aimed at preventing sexual harassment and abuse in Quebec sport organisations and the perceptions of stakeholders involved in these measures.

Outline of methods and ethical issues

The research project described in this chapter was conducted in three Quebec sport federations and three clubs in the Quebec City region which are affiliated, respectively, with each of these three federations. In each of these federations and clubs, sport stakeholders were targeted to participate in the study. To maintain confidentiality, the sports chosen are not identified in this article. This project was approved by the Laval University research ethics committee.

To meet the purpose and goals of this research, a multiple instrumental case study design was used (Stake, 2006). Semi-structured interviews and analysis of written materials or documents were used to provide answers to the research questions. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the sport stakeholders targeted in the study: (a) administrators of the sport federations, (b) administrators of the affiliated clubs, (c) athletes in the affiliated clubs, (d) coaches in the affiliated clubs, and (e) parents of athletes in the affiliated clubs. All the guides dealt with the same themes, that is, the sport environment surrounding the athletes and the stakeholders' perceptions regarding sexual abuse and preventive measures. Lastly, the body of written materials on prevention of sexual abuse held by the sport federations and the

affiliated clubs was analysed. The documents examined dealt with: policies, prevention programmes, codes of ethics and conduct, rules and disciplinary action, awareness-raising, training, and general regulations. A total of 27 sport stakeholders participated in the project. Of these, five were sport administrators, six were coaches, nine were athletes and six were parents.

The data gathered were analysed using content analysis (L'Écuyer, 1987). Content analysis was also used to analyse the written documents (Gratton and Jones, 2004). In this study, the documents identified for analysis related to: (a) the general regulations of the organisations, (b) the policies on sexual abuse, (c) the codes of ethics or conduct, (d) awareness-raising, information or training regarding sexual abuse or (e) any other document deemed relevant by the researchers. The information related to sexual abuse sought in the identified documents included rules regarding behaviour management, existing policies and codes of ethics, and any disciplinary action or disciplinary measures proposed.

Key research findings

Problems raised by the sport stakeholders with regard to prevention

Poor perception of prevention: According to the parents, coaches and administrators, one of the problems related to the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in sport is that such prevention is sometimes seen negatively by the sport stakeholders involved in sport organisations, who believe that talking about these subjects might arouse fear in the general public and among the various members of the sport organisation implementing preventive measures. Moreover, it is felt that any preventive steps taken could create the impression that there has been or currently is a problem and that the organisation is thus taking steps to resolve the problem or prevent it from recurring. Coaches and administrators appeared to fear that this could lead to heightened attention on the part of parents or athletes, potentially leading to false accusations against them. Some administrators admitted that cases of sexual harassment and abuse were the kind of occurrence they preferred not to talk about or reveal publicly to avoid harming the organisation and its image.

The impossibility of 100% prevention: Many parents felt that it is impossible to entirely prevent sexual harassment and abuse, which constitutes another problem with regard to prevention. The administrators also expressed doubts with regard to the effectiveness of prevention, especially given that it often requires substantial investments on the part of sport organisations in terms of time, funds and other resources, sometimes with minimal results. The administrators also questioned how long the impacts of such prevention would last compared with the investments made.

Lack of leadership and little priority given to the issue: The coaches and administrators clearly stated that sexual harassment and abuse is not a priority for sport organisations. Moreover, they said there is a significant lack of leadership with regard to this issue. According to the administrators, other issues are always more pressing, in part because dealing with the

prevention of sexual harassment or abuse does not involve immediate action within a short or specific deadline, as is often the case, for example, when it comes to organising a championship.

General indifference with regard to the issue: According to the administrators, sexual harassment and abuse does not hold much interest for sport organisations. In their opinion, people are not interested in awareness-raising, information or training related to this subject. They expressed the view that people who are involved in sports are more interested in information or training sessions that are directly related to the sport itself. The coaches expressed the same opinion. They said that documents and information on this subject are not read and that the coaches who do read them do not remember the information presented in them. In short, this issue did not appear to hold much interest for the coaches either. They themselves admitted that if they read a code of ethics, for example, they did not pay attention to the aspects related to sexual harassment and abuse because this issue held so little interest for them.

Lack of time, competence and resources: The coaches and administrators stated that sport organisations lacked the time and resources (financial, human, etc.) to manage sexual harassment and abuse. For example, they said that there were no funds available to hire an expert to assist them. They felt that the lack of paid personnel in sport organisations and the high number of volunteers involved in supporting and running these organisations leads to a situation whereby the organisations do not have the available resources at hand to make any headway with regard to this issue. Thus, sexual harassment and abuse is simply not given any priority due to the lack of time and financial and human resources. Furthermore, the administrators admitted that another obstacle to prevention was their lack of competence with regard to this issue. For example, they said they did not know who to address to obtain information on preventing sexual harassment and abuse. Moreover, they said they would be unable and were simply not in a position to detect cases if any were to occur in their organisation. They specified that they lacked training, were not very familiar with the problem and felt a pressing need for assistance from experts in this matter.

Inadequate, incomplete or non-existent measures to prevent and manage sexual harassment and abuse: According to the coaches and administrators, existing measures to prevent and manage sexual harassment and abuse are inadequate, incomplete (full of gaps) or simply non-existent. The coaches said that they were not well-equipped to prevent such harassment or abuse from taking place or to protect themselves with regard to this issue. They said that existing and known policies and tools are not very concrete or accessible. Moreover, policies are overly reactive rather than being proactive or preventive in nature. There is also a lack of measures with regard to hiring coaches. Thus, the coaches interviewed pointed out that coaches who have been dismissed on the grounds of abuse can easily find coaching jobs elsewhere and that even with a background check, some coaches still go undetected because cases do not always result in a criminal record. Furthermore, the coaches added that there is a lack of supervision on the part of sport organisations, such that coaches have freedom to do whatever they wish.

The administrators felt that the policies in place are hard to apply on the ground. Also, they did not see what kind of control they could exert over their members, especially given that, as provincial sport federations, they do not have direct links with coaches and athletes at the club level. The question of the coaches' status with regard to the federation (member or non-member) was also an ambiguous factor for the administrators of provincial federations in terms of applying such policies. Moreover, the administrators admitted that the information provided by the federations (training, policies, etc.) is not transmitted to the clubs, which constitutes an additional problem with regard to prevention.

Existing measures in sport organisations

The results presented here come from an analysis of the measures related to sexual harassment and abuse that currently exist in sport organisations. More specifically, the measures were divided into two groups, those related to prevention and those related to case management. In the following tables, "yes" signifies that the measure exists in the organisation. "F" refers to "federation" and "C" refers to "club." The figures accompanying the letters refer to the sport practised. Thus, F1 and C1 represent the provincial federation and the club for the same sport, and so on.

Preventive measures: training, information and awareness-raising: The results reveal that none of the parents or athletes who participated in this study had received training on sexual harassment and abuse (Table 16.1). In fact, currently, no training is offered in the organisations studied. The athletes and parents also stated that they had never received information on sexual harassment and abuse through documents or awareness-raising materials. Some sport organisations nevertheless have this type of document at their disposal. The administrators, as well, had not received training on sexual harassment and abuse. As for the coaches, training on sexual harassment and abuse was provided in some organisations. Although resources were available, the coaches did not seem to have retained the information provided in these training sessions.

Table 16.1 Preventive measures: training, information and awareness-raising

Sport organisations Type of measure	F1	C1	F2	C2	F3	C3
Preventive measures						
<i>Training, information and awareness-raising</i>						
Training or information session	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Training of the person in charge of this "file"	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Leaflets, posters or other kinds of awareness-raising material	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Preventive measures - Hiring process: Table 16.2 clearly demonstrates that there were no preventive measures in place with regard to the recruitment of volunteers. Volunteers could therefore easily be invited to work in a sport organisation without any background check and sometimes even without any prior selection interview. As for paid employees, more specifically coaches, it can be observed that although most organisations claimed to carry out selection interviews, the sport administrators pointed out that these interviews concerned the coaches' sports-related competencies and did not include any specific questions concerning their behaviour toward athletes. Furthermore, it appears that while most sport organisations checked candidates' references, this precaution was neither systematic nor formal. As for checking for criminal records, only F3 claimed to do so, but specified that this procedure only applied to direct employees of the federation and coaches of teams at the provincial level, which means that coaches of local and regional clubs working under the federation were automatically excluded from such checks. Lastly, only F3 presented its policy on harassment to its direct employees at the time of hiring. F1 had a policy in place, but did not communicate this policy to its employees.

Table 16.2 Preventive measures: hiring process

Sport organisations	F1	C1	F2	C2	F3	C3
	F1	C1	F2	C2	F3	C3
Type of measure						
Preventive measures						
Hiring process						
Selection interviews (employees)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Selection interviews (volunteers)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Criminal background checks (employees)	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Criminal background checks (volunteers)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Reference check (employees)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Policy on sexual harassment (presented during hiring)	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Preventive measures: Rules and regulations concerning behaviour management: There were no instructions or written rules relating to showers, change rooms, trips away, sharing of hotel rooms, and so on (Table 16.3). Only one federation had a written regulation in its policy on sexual harassment and abuse prohibiting romantic/sexual relationships between coaches and athletes. Codes of conduct were rare and when one such code existed, it did not require the coaches' signature and no disciplinary action was attached to it. Moreover, most of these codes were produced by the provincial or Canadian sport federations and were not adopted by or did not apply to local member organisations.

Table 16.3 Preventive measures: Rules and regulations concerning behaviour management

Sport organisations Type of measure	F1	C1	F2	C2	F3	C3
Preventive measures						
<i>Rules and regulations concerning behaviour management</i>						
Rules and regulations concerning locker room or showers	No	No	No	No	No	No
Rules and regulations concerning sexual or intimate relations between coaches and athletes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Rules and regulations concerning travel and hotel rooms	No	No	No	No	No	No
Code of ethics (without sanction [WS], non signed [NS])	Yes [WS] [NS]	Yes [WS] [NS]	No	No	Yes [WS] [NS]	No

Case management measures: The results show that only two sport federations had a policy on sexual harassment and abuse (Table 16.4). Moreover, these policies only applied to immediate employees of the federations and not to the coaches in local clubs. Also, the national and provincial federations delegated the responsibility for adopting policies to lower-level organisations. Therefore, the policies in place applied to only a very small number of coaches. It was also observed that the athletes, parents and coaches did not know what procedures they should follow or what resources would be available if a problem were to occur.

Table 16.4 Case management measures

Sport organisations Type of measure	F1	C1	F2	C2	F3	C3
Case management measures						
Policy, complaint procedures and committee	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Disciplinary measures	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Internal or external resources in case a problem arises	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Rules and regulations concerning suspension and expulsion	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Discussion

The results show that many important problems exist with regard to athlete protection in the sport organisations studied. Indeed, we observed that sport stakeholders are not well trained,

informed or aware, especially athletes, parents and sport administrators. This confirmed previous results of Brackenridge *et al.* (2004) on the scarce training available for parents and athletes. Based on the literature, when athletes know very little about sexual harassment and abuse, this constitutes a risk factor that should not be ignored (Brackenridge and Kirby, 1997; Cense and Brackenridge, 2001; Jaques and Brackenridge, 1999; Leahy *et al.*, 2002; Sundgot-Borgen *et al.*, 2003).

Moreover, the fact that sport administrators did not receive training on this topic is problematic. Indeed, this situation is cause for concern because it is specifically these stakeholders who are called on to implement policies, react if a problem arises, manage the behaviour of coaches, recruit staff and so on. These stakeholders are thus an important link in the prevention and management of cases. According to researchers, this lack of training for administrators in sport organisations also creates a context that is conducive to the development of sexual harassment and abuse (Brackenridge, 1994; Brackenridge, 1997; Cense and Brackenridge, 2001; Kirby *et al.*, 2000).

It should also be noted that there is a lack of rules relating to behaviour management in sport organisations. A lack of clear guidelines and codes of conduct as well as difficulty establishing behaviour boundaries are considered to be a major problem in sexual harassment and abuse prevention (Brackenridge, 2001, 2002, 2004; Bringer *et al.*, 2002; Malkin *et al.*, 2000; Parent, 2005). Another problem is the limited pre-employment screening observed in the organisations studied. Exerting control over who joins the organisation is nevertheless a logical solution in terms of better preventing sexual abuse (Cense and Brackenridge, 2001; Smallbone *et al.*, 2008). Also, few measures for managing cases of sexual harassment and abuse are available and existing measures are considered to be overly complex and not highly applicable to affiliated clubs. This constitutes a real and important risk factor for the development of sexual harassment and abuse (Brackenridge, 1994, 1997; Cense and Brackenridge, 2001, Kirby *et al.*, 2000; Parent, 2005).

The way sport stakeholders view prevention can contribute greatly to limiting the effort made in this regard or to no effort being made at all. In fact, the stakeholders greatly trivialised the impacts and the effectiveness of sexual harassment and abuse prevention. Although they considered it important to try to prevent this problem, the coaches, parents and administrators seemed to be afraid that prevention would arouse fear within the organisation and that members would think that measures were being implemented because sexual harassment and abuse existed in their organisation. Moreover, sport stakeholders seemed to be worried that raising awareness of sexual harassment and abuse would lead to false allegations made by parents who would become more attentive and observant, or by athletes who would become more aware of sexual harassment and abuse. According to many researchers, fear of false allegations constitutes a considerable impediment to prevention (Brackenridge, 2001, 2002; Bringer *et al.*, 2002). Statistics on false allegations nevertheless show that such accusations are very rare (Oates *et al.*, 2000; Trocmé and Bala, 2005). Furthermore, fears of false allegations of abuse against coaches and authority figures have been shown to be unfounded (Brackenridge *et al.*, 2005).

Finally, sexual harassment and abuse appeared to be a low priority issue for the sport organisations studied. This problem was raised by all the administrators who considered that, due to the lack of leadership, training and financial and human resources, sexual harassment and abuse would remain a low priority issue. Brackenridge (2002, 2004, 2006) attributes the difficulty in carrying out prevention to inertia on the part of senior leaders of sport organisations and to the fact that prevention is viewed as a burden rather than as a benefit, as was clearly seen among the coaches and administrators interviewed. The lack of resources and competence also seemed to affect the interventions and actions of sport organisations with regard to sexual harassment and abuse, a fact which has also been observed in other studies (Bringer *et al.*, 2002; Malkin *et al.*, 2000).

Recommendations for policy makers and sport organisations

Given that a lack of training among sport administrators was an important factor hampering the implementation of measures to prevent and manage cases of sexual harassment and abuse, it is necessary to enhance their competence in this matter. Thus, training should be provided for the sport administrators in federations and local clubs to enable them to manage sexual harassment and abuse in terms of both prevention and intervention. Moreover, sport organisations should have access to a resource-person or a body that could help and advise them on this matter. This body could be called on to design and provide training, awareness-raising sessions, and tools for sport organisations while serving as a reference resource for the organisations if a case should arise. Furthermore, this body could provide leadership in athlete protection and ensure that intra- and inter-organisation measures are standardised to avoid disparities between sport organisations. Several authors have also recommended standardising sexual harassment and abuse measures (Brackenridge, 2006; Weber *et al.*, 2006).

Internal and external barriers should also be made more effective. Since the external barriers are weak, the procedures for recruiting coaches and volunteers should be systematised and formalised. Offering training, disseminating information and raising awareness as well as establishing clear rules and procedures related to behaviour management constitute ways to make the internal barriers more solid and more effective. Also, in order to achieve effective athlete protection, policies and complaint procedures need to be established in local organisations as well as in national or provincial federations. Given that policies from higher-level organisations are not very applicable to member organisations, it is essential that these measures be adapted to the lower-level organisations that work directly with the athletes.

Finally, it is hoped that the culture of not taking responsibility for sexual harassment and abuse that is prevalent in sport organisations will change so that better protection can be provided to athletes. The low priority of sexual harassment and abuse as well as the lack of accountability, leadership and interest in athlete protection are all factors that should be dealt with. Sport organisations must become more conscious of the importance of protecting athletes.

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Chapter 17: *The medical welfare of elite athletes: The unintended consequences of organisational change*

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Overview

This chapter documents the intended and unintended outcomes of three recent organisational changes in sports medicine. It argues that these combined developments have provided opportunities for clinicians to work full-time, be involved in supportive networks and assisted those wishing to enter or progress in sports medicine through a more structured career path. At the same time, however, the commitment to 'professionalising' sports medicine has led to inter- and intra-professional tensions between practitioner groups. In particular, in polarising medical support around the Home Countries Institutes of Sport (HCIS) the labour of some medical providers is being increasingly marginalised, the support offered to athletes in different sports remains inequitable and, due to the closer link between sports performance and funding, there is evidence to suggest that medical support is likely to be withdrawn from athletes at the point when it is most needed. Such changes potentially have significant implications for athlete welfare.

Outline of methods

As part of a broader study (Scott, 2010) data were derived from semi-structured interviews undertaken between January and May 2008 with 14 doctors and 14 physiotherapists who were currently members of the British Olympic Association's (BOA) medical and physiotherapy committees respectively (each Olympic sport National Governing Body nominates one doctor and one physiotherapist to each committee). Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviewees were asked about how they became involved in sports medicine, their typical routines when treating athletes at home and at competition events such as the Olympics and any difficulties they experienced within their role. They were also asked about their working relationships with athletes, coaches and other medical staff and how these had developed and altered during their employment. It was within this context that reflections on the consequences of organisational change emerged.

Key research findings and issues

Since its recognition as a medical speciality by the UK Department of Health in 2005, sport and exercise medicine has witnessed three major changes in its organisation. First, a number of sports medicine training courses have been developed at postgraduate level (8 universities are currently listed on the BASEM website that offer postgraduate courses) and this builds on UK sports medicine staff endeavours to develop the 'traits' (Parsons, 1951; Friedson, 1970) generally associated with professions, and the medical profession in particular. This has

included the establishment of professional bodies (BASEM) and a professional journal, *The British Journal of Sports Medicine*. Second, practitioners are encouraged (and job specifications increasingly request) to have a formally accredited sports and exercise medicine qualification to work in the field. Third, in 2002 the HCIS was launched and aimed to provide sports science and medical support services to elite athletes in England through a network of regional centres.

Interview data indicate a number of positive outcomes of such organisational change. Principally, attempts to standardise criteria for entry into sports medicine (particularly the need for formal qualifications) has served as a marker of a 'new type' of expert, the sports medicine clinician, and evidence suggests that those with formally accredited qualifications have been promoted to more prominent positions within sports medicine. An emphasis on sport-specific medical qualifications has also served to improve standards of medical practice, provided a better foundation for the career development of clinicians already working in this area and encouraged those hoping to access the area in the future. A number of interviewees thus explained that this had created a more structured profession. Many clinicians believed that these qualifications were an increasingly important means of securing a career in sport and exercise medicine as sports medicine organisations (e.g. EIS), national governing bodies (NGBs), other health-care providers and athletes prioritised these in making medical appointments. It was particularly important for clinicians to assure athletes that they were receiving treatment from an appropriate source. For example, one doctor simply stated "*my athletes don't see anybody who doesn't have one [sports medicine qualification] full stop*".

Whilst both doctors and physiotherapists were encouraged to achieve a postgraduate qualification, physiotherapists were additionally encouraged to pursue several other methods of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order to successfully progress within the profession. Of these formalities, it was the CSP's (Chartered Society of Physiotherapists) CPD portfolio scheme developed in 2001 that was most often discussed by interviewees. Many saw this as an opportunity to establish their status as leading sports medicine practitioners and distinguish themselves from other (lesser) providers of physiotherapy care. It was these more practical elements of learning that were considered by the majority of physiotherapists as crucial to their professional progression and for improving their physiotherapy skills given physiotherapists' more 'hands on' work (both literally and metaphorically).

As part of the drive towards greater professionalism, medical services have also become increasingly associated with formal organisations of the HCIS. In particular, the English Institute of Sport (established in 2002) has provided sports medicine with an increasingly powerful position in the market for athlete medical services. In comparison to the part-time and ad hoc organisation of medical services highlighted in professional football (Waddington *et al.*, 2001) and professional rugby (Malcolm and Sheard, 2002) the introduction of sports medicine specific institutions was an attempt to create a full-time, 'professional' and formal system of athlete health care. The introduction of EIS centres has created an opportunity for sports medicine provision to be marketed on multi-disciplinary care, as part of a range of medical staff including doctors, physiotherapists and masseurs working at one site as opposed to being geographically dispersed and/or accessed in an ad hoc way. Some practitioners believed that this has created

better communication between people working in different areas of sports medicine provision and, consequently, advice to athletes about their pain and injuries was more consistent between different areas of medical practice.

Whilst interviewees noted the perceived benefits of such organisational change, it was the *unintended* outcomes of these developments which were more greatly emphasised in interviews. In short, it was felt that attempts to 'professionalise' sports medicine have led to inter- and intra- professional tensions among clinicians. The following discussion documents the remarks of doctors and physiotherapists about the impact of these changes for their respective professions and the consequences for the medical services they provide.

The unintended outcomes of organisational change

Whilst the introduction of formal qualifications had allowed doctors to market themselves more successfully, progress within sports medicine and gain greater autonomy over their practice, the same did not apply for physiotherapists. Though, like doctors, physiotherapists recognised a postgraduate qualification as a further prerequisite for obtaining a job in elite sport, interviewees were more equivocal about their desirability. Those who most vehemently resisted this development were physiotherapists who had already practised for a number of years. One physiotherapist stated:

The only reason I am doing it [the MSc] is because I have to do it. I'm not doing it because I want to do it. I love my profession and I want to keep doing what I am doing but I can't do that unless I do these stepping stones. It annoys me that I have already got the experience and I have done x, y and z ... I don't see why a piece of paper is going to make me a better physiotherapist.

Part of physiotherapists' resistance to the introduction of written qualifications was reflected in intra-professional tensions between younger, MSc qualified physiotherapists and older, experienced, but non MSc qualified physiotherapists. In contrast to data from doctors where younger, specialist qualified practitioners were given greater status in sports medicine, it was the younger, specialist qualified physiotherapists who were described by a number of interviewees as problematic within the profession as they were regarded by many as having a restricted scope of practice. In particular, some physiotherapists felt those who had obtained the MSc had done so to the detriment of establishing basic, background physiotherapy skills. One physiotherapist described this problem thus:

Physiotherapists are specialising far too early in sports. A lot of very nice, young physiotherapists who have got more qualifications, you know, they have got the masters but they have not got that background experience which I think is actually quite dangerous.

Perhaps surprisingly, those who had already obtained an MSc and those currently working towards one also shared these views, which is in contrast to those doctors who placed a higher

value on higher education qualifications. Whilst formal, written qualifications in sports medicine were seen by the majority of doctors as crucial to the practice of sports medicine and vital to their status as sports medicine practitioners, physiotherapists believed that the MSc was not particularly useful to their clinical practice and did not feel that it gave them any greater prestige in the sports physiotherapy community.

Thus, whilst movements toward formally organising both sports medicine and sports physiotherapy has been successful for doctors, some emphasis on traditional and less formal means of employment and evaluation remains in sports physiotherapy practise. Whilst doctors are comfortable to market themselves to athletes as sports medicine 'specialists' by virtue of their formal qualifications and see such qualifications as the basis of their credibility in the sports medicine community, physiotherapists are reliant on demonstrating their expertise via hands-on work with athletes and by establishing good working relationships with their clients and colleagues for further recommendation. Data thus indicate that the introduction of formal qualifications such as the MSc, are, in some ways, incompatible with the traditional practising methods of sports physiotherapists' work and has created tension among those practising in this area.

The greater control of the EIS over medical services has also resulted in a number of unintended consequences. Fundamentally, not every sport is able to afford the 'EIS package' and as such, the EIS appear to provide sports medicine services to those athletes (and sports) which possess particular credentials. Athletes and sports that had a record of producing Olympic medals were able to access these medical services whereas sports with limited international success were not. Highlighting this issue of differential access, one doctor stated: I think the EIS works well providing an athlete is of sufficient standing with a national governing body that has sufficient money to be able to buy into the EIS programme. I think where it works less well is where that is not the case.

The geographical locality of EIS institutes also created problems for some athletes. With just nine EIS sites in the UK, most of them covered a large geographical area. For example, the South West EIS institute (based at the University of Bath) covers one of the largest geographical regions within the EIS network, providing medical support to athletes located throughout six counties including Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. Thus, whilst the EIS bases are nationalised, they are also regionalised and are usually based in areas where the majority of podium level athletes in major sports train. Thus, whilst the EIS is regionalised to provide broad cover, it is also organised according to individual sports (and hence you have to live in a certain place to get appropriate care). This has consequences for athletes who live and train in other geographical locations who may have to seek alternative medical treatment closer to home. Moreover, doctors responsible for 'minor' sports often did not dedicate so much practising time to these sports compared with 'major' sports (this major/minor distinction was funding-specific: sports that had previous medal success generally had increased medical support). For example, one EIS doctor responsible for medical provision to a minor Olympic sport described how s/he did not *"go to anything for [the sport]"* and s/he *"hardly s[aw] them at all"*. This might also affect the continuity of medical care provided to

athletes from minor sports and may be another reason for athletes seeking health-care outside of this network. The implication of these problems is that minor sports are not considered as important as major sports and highlights the fragmentation of service provision in British Olympic sports medicine and the notion that sports medicine provision becomes a self-perpetuating cycle of international success.

Thus, medical services provided by the EIS are organised hierarchically and are largely concerned with those athletes and sports who are currently successful; where success is measured on the basis of medals generated and the economic resources of particular sports (the link between performance and economic success is highlighted in the work of Hoberman, 1992 and Howe, 2004 particularly). The following doctor discussed what sociologists have termed the risk-pain-injury (Nixon, 1992) paradox which the EIS funding arrangements forced athletes toward:

Also, I have to say, where athletes get sick or injured and cannot perform, cannot maintain their rankings and then bizarrely fall out of the category which provides them with support at the very time that they need it the most.

The link between successful performances and medical support was highlighted when team GB long jumper Jade Johnson lost her lottery funding after a string of disappointing performances due to injury (www.telegraph.co.uk 2009).

The increasing reliance on formally accredited knowledge coupled with the polarisation of medical services to the EIS has created inter- and intra-professional conflict among practitioners. The understanding by EIS doctors that they were working at the 'top end' of sports medicine (which, in turn, they felt made them better sports medicine clinicians) created conflict between themselves and doctors working outside the EIS, with doctors working within the EIS system critical of non-EIS doctors' lack of expertise. This marginalisation of non-EIS practitioners contributes to the fragmentation of the 'sports medicine profession' as a result of professionalisation. Interviewees highlighted a process which served to shift NGB doctors without the desired qualifications or association with the EIS into increasingly peripheral roles or out of sports medicine entirely. One EIS doctor described how NGB doctors have "*got to try and justify their existence at times*". Another doctor described how his/her hands-on role with athletes had gradually reduced as a result of the monopolisation of sports medicine by EIS appointed, formally qualified, sports medicine specialists. The interviewee described how this had made him/her increasingly cautious about what s/he was permitted to do when treating athletes:

It didn't matter so much before but now, because I don't have a sports medicine qualification, it's probably getting to the point where any doctor who is going to examine and investigate and recommend treatment for an athlete, particularly a top-class athlete, needs to have a proper sports medicine qualification and be on the professional register. So doctors now have to tread a bit more carefully. I know in the past there were a lot of doctors who were pretty confident because they had good

experience and didn't have a formal qualification but would happily do anything. The trouble is, now everything is becoming more formalised and you have to be careful not to step out of your own comfort zone so I am aware of that.

In contrast to doctors, the establishment of the EIS had not impacted upon physiotherapists' work in the same way or to the same extent. Physiotherapists acknowledged the EIS's control over many aspects of service delivery but those who worked within and outside of the EIS were generally more critical of this organisation overall. Physiotherapists expressed concern that the EIS was relatively haphazard in terms of rewarding those with occupational experience. For them, the EIS did not support those physiotherapists who had valuable practical experience and were more concerned with promoting those who had managerial experience or formal qualifications. Thus, there was more evidence of intra-EIS conflict among physiotherapists than there was for doctors employed by the EIS.

Moreover, and in accordance with their resistance to formally qualified physiotherapists, a number of sports physiotherapists described how those physiotherapists who had become employed in sport via less formal means were often 'better' physiotherapists. In this regard, physiotherapists consistently referred to the centrality of hands-on experience over written qualifications and the less formal and less professional means of employment. Central among these is their focus on practical care, emphasised in their dedication to work physically, voluntarily and vocationally.

Conclusions

For doctors, the movement towards formal qualifications and the establishment of sports medicine institutions has produced a number of changes such as the ability for certain doctors to progress through more structured career paths, to work full-time, to develop their careers and to be involved in supportive networks. At the same time, however, this commitment to progressing sports medicine into a 'professionalised' occupation has unintentionally led to a division between those doctors who have established themselves within a more formalised and bureaucratic system and those who became involved in sports medicine through traditional means; i.e. being informally approached and appointed and holding the position in a largely honorary capacity. In contrast, physiotherapists were shown to be more resistant to attempts to formalise sports physiotherapy along an academic trajectory. For them, formal qualifications did not serve to promote their status as sports medicine practitioners in the same way as formally qualified doctors and many believed that this aspect of the 'professional project' (Larson, 1977) actually reduced the importance and centrality of their traditional physiotherapy skills in sports medicine. In this regard, and in contrast to doctors, physiotherapists who had become employed in sport via these more formal routes were perceived disapprovingly by those who had a number of years practising, with hands-on experience.

Data also reveal that the EIS is not large enough or sufficiently funded to cover all sports and, therefore, the dilemma for those responsible for Olympic sports medicine development is the continued dependence on national governing body doctors and private physiotherapists for

medical support whilst also attempting to reduce their autonomy over medical support through professionalisation. Whilst sports medicine is externally projected by organisations such as the EIS as a legitimate area of medical practice, this projection does not reflect the heterogeneity of practice within the sports medicine community.

Implications for sports organisations

These data have practical implications for the provision, organisation and practices of sports medicine in British sports and therefore for the welfare of athletes. The broader study has outlined what sports medicine practitioners are currently achieving in terms of their formal organisation and their typical medical practices. Attempts have been made to enhance the care that athletes receive in UK Olympic sport by creating a more centralised and 'professional' system of medical service organised around a core sports medicine speciality identity. Given its embryonic development, however, there remain issues related to the current structure of sport and exercise medicine and, in particular, risk associated with the inter- and intra-professional relations between the various groups currently involved in this area of medical practice. Given the greater emphasis on medical services provided by those with formal qualifications and who are more directly involved in bureaucratic organisations such as the EIS, the gap between these practitioners and those who continue to provide important services for athletes on a voluntary basis has widened. As a result, certain athletes have been squeezed out of this system of support due to reform and access to medical services has become increasingly inequitable. There is a need to develop a centralised framework that ensures all athletes are able to receive the best medical support available.

Extending the research

In order to understand sports medicine care 'in the round' (Goudsblom, 1977) it is fundamental to investigate athletes' perceptions of medical services alongside clinicians. This additional research would provide useful information on the medical providers with whom athletes consulted, their experiences and evaluations of clinician-patient interactions and the respective roles of various health care practitioners. How, for instance, do athletes evaluate the respective treatments provided by doctors and physiotherapists? How do the experiences of clinician-patient interactions differ among child and adult athletes? To what extent should medical decisions on children's injuries be made by a responsible adult (e.g. coach) or should we allow children to make their own decisions on treatment?

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PART 5: CODA

Chapter 18: *Future priorities for research on elite child athlete welfare*

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Overview

In the final stages of the International Symposium, delegates were asked to discuss and agree upon their top three priorities for both behavioural and policy research on child athlete welfare. They were asked to do this against the presentations they had heard (see Chapters 2-17) and the questions set out at the start (see Chapter 1).

This chapter outlines the research priorities highlighted during the symposium. It is intended that these will provide an agenda to facilitate, guide and focus future research related to elite child athlete welfare.

Method

During the symposium, the delegates split into two groups. The first group was comprised of people whose work primarily relates to behavioural issues whilst the second group focused on issues related to policy. Both groups conducted a mind-mapping exercise to identify key research priorities.

Findings

Whilst the groups had different foci (either behaviour or policy) their resultant agendas looked remarkably similar, perhaps indicating that fundamental and applied research in this field of study are not so far apart as we might think. As a whole, the proposed priorities support the recommendations of Kelly and Pringle (2009). Specifically, they call for child centred research which considers both the interpersonal power dynamics as well as contextual factors.

Behavioural research priorities

1. *The prevalence of abuse in sport*

- Prevalence of all forms of abuse
- Comparison across sports
- Comparison across nations
- Review of current child abuse prevention policies
- International mapping and benchmarking

2. *The process of abuse in sport*

- Male and female perpetrators
- The coach-athlete relationship

- Interpersonal power
- Behaviour of adults in positions of trust with children
- Organizational cultures and abuse

3. The consequences of abuse in sport

- Psychosocial consequences
- Impact on performance
- Cost of abuse – using a health cost-benefit analysis
- Issues of welfare and well-being
- The ripple effect – cost to others

Policy research priorities

1. Measuring impact

- How can we measure the impact of policy over time
- How can we include all key stakeholders

2. Effective policies

- Can adopting a policy on athlete welfare/wellbeing lead to short and long term positive outcomes for athletes and their teams?
- What factors are associated with effective and ineffective policies

3. International perspective

- What is the impact of international policy change on action by policy makers internationally (using UN General Comments 13 on article 19)

The way forward

The range of priorities and key stakeholders of elite child athlete welfare ensures that this is a challenging agenda for the future. Despite this, it is important to advocate a coherent approach such that the benefit of partnerships can be maximised and the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. The two groups agreed upon the following as methods for maximising the impact of research on policy and practice in sport.

- Organise annual face-to-face meetings
- Produce position statements
- Make research/policy/practice partnerships work
- Conduct research on the priorities highlighted above
- Maintain contact virtually
- Link with other organisations who carry the same messages
- Publish in academic journals and books
- Highlight key messages from research for main stakeholder groups
- Use BIRNAW as an advisory/mentoring group

Conclusions

As demonstrated by the research considered in this book, significant strides have been made over recent years in our efforts to promote and protect the welfare of elite child athletes. Despite this progress, there remains considerable scope for future research.